Agents of Change in the Greco-Roman and Early Modern Periods

Ten Case Studies in Agency in Innovation

EUHORMOS

Edited by
Silvia Castelli and Ineke Sluiter

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Preface

This volume stems from the online workshop 'Agents of Change', that we organized on 15 and 22 April 2021 as part of the research program 'Anchoring Innovation', supported by an NWO Gravitation Grant (project number 024.003.012).[1] This research program is carried out by a consortium of researchers belonging to the National Research School in Classical Studies, the Netherlands: OIKOS. It studies processes of innovation in different societal domains in the ancient world, with a particular interest in the human factor in the adoption of the new, through connecting it to the already familiar ('anchoring'). In all societal domains in which intentional change occurs, different 'Agents of Change' can be identified, and this issue was the focus of our workshop.

In order to stimulate shared thinking about this particular aspect of innovation in different domains of the classical and early modern world against the backdrop of modern ideas on and models of diffusion of innovation, we had suggested that our speakers read Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point. How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston 2000). This popularizing work provided initial common ground to the participants of the workshop, scholars of ancient literature, architecture, festivals, politics, monasticism, and other topics, who were all studying change and innovation, but would not otherwise have used insights from marketing, economics, or the psychology of change. This shared reading prompted them to explore, to the extent required by their topic, further theories and concepts of agency and change in, and particularly, after the workshop, when a selection of the papers read there were further researched and finetuned for inclusion in this volume. And this in turn became the cornerstone for the intellectual cohesion of the volume in front of you.

Our thanks go to Suzanne van de Liefvoort, general coordinator of 'Anchoring Innovation', for helping us in organizing the online workshop. To Marike van Aerde, Bert van den Bergh, Emanuela Colombi, Floris van den Eijnde, Vincent Hunink, Jacqueline Klooster, Marianne Pade, Christoph Pieper, and Filippomaria Pontani for generously investing their time and expertise in reviewing individual chapters of this volume. To Luuk Huitink, Basil Nelis, and Matthew Payne for proofreading the English. To Cornelis van Tilburg and Hylke de Boer for assisting us in compiling the indices. And finally, to the anonymous readers of the series Euhormos and to our Brill editor, Giulia Moriconi.

Throughout the volume we have used Latinate spelling of proper names.

Ineke Sluiter and Silvia Castelli

1 For more information see www.anchoringinnovation.nl.

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General Introduction: Agents of Change

Silvia Castelli

1 Introduction

'A fuller sense of the past also requires a fuller sense of causation, of agency, of what it is that made things happen as they did'.[1] This requirement may be all the more pressing when 'what happens' is a purposeful change. This volume explores the nature, features, and dynamics of agency in bringing about change in the ancient Greco-Roman world and the early modern period and our case studies involve archaeological (material), historical, philosophical, literary, and religious changes, in the period from the fourth century BCE to the early sixteenth century CE. Thus, our team of contributors works in the broad field of classical studies.

Five broad questions are addressed in the studies that follow:

(1) Who and/or what has agency? In particular, we are interested in the question to what degree, and to what extent can agency be extended to non-human beings and things.
(2) What is the relationship between individual and collective agency, and what is the relevance of competition, synergy, and entanglement of agents in an innovation?
(3) What is the relationship between agency and power?
(4) What are the different roles played by human agents in the process of innovation, and to what extent can modern categories of agency be used for ancient case studies?
(5) What different strategies are used by human agents to embed change in society?

In this introduction, I shall clarify the terminology used in this volume (Section 2), provide some theoretical background on human and non-human agency (Section 3), and address the issue of the use, in the study of the ancient world, of concepts and terminology employed in two of the most popular models of diffusion of innovation (Section 4). In Section 5, I shall describe the ten chapters of this volume and in the conclusion (Section 6) I shall come back to the results of the case studies for the general research questions mentioned above.

1 See McNeill, this volume, Chapter 1, p. 28.

2 Invention, Change, Innovation, and Anchoring

In this volume, we regard 'invention' and 'innovation' as two different concepts. We define as 'invention' a new product, object, practice, technique, but also idea, or any other 'form of purposeful or intentional change' introduced 'to solve newly identified problems, or to cope with old issues in as yet unexplored ways'.[2] 'Invention' can thus be a starting point of what may develop into an embedded change. This volume mainly studies cases of purposeful and intentional change, but also addresses some cases of unintentional change.[3] Innovation, like invention, may occur in any domain of society: religion, philosophy, politics, literature—to mention only a few which will be considered in the course of this volume. Innovation is the stage where anything 'new' has been implemented, made operational, and eventually become embedded in society; that is, the stage which is reached when the new has been 'anchored'. Innovation is thus the successful adoption of the new by 'anchoring' it to something deemed familiar to a relevant social group.[4]

'Anchoring' is a crucial concept. Its role of connecting the new to the familiar was highlighted as early as the sixteenth century, although not in the same terms. In his *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, published posthumously in 1531, Niccolò Machiavelli points to the use of traditional names for new institutions as one strategy to make an innovation in the field of governance acceptable and to maintain it to everyone's satisfaction. The proposed change may be radical, but in order to become successful, says Machiavelli, the new should have 'at least the shadow' (*l'ombra almanco*), that is the vestigial appearance, 'of the old customs' (*de' modi antichi*): changes should retain as much as possible of what is old. Machiavelli sees this 'shadow' as a necessary condition for successful innovation, and explains its necessity with reference to the human mind's cognitive difficulties in processing change (*alterando le cose nuove le menti degli uomini*).[5]

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2 Sluiter 2017: 21.

3 Unintentional change will be explored primarily in Chapters 1–3, intentional change in the other chapters.

4 On the concept of 'new', see Sluiter 2021.

5 'He who desires or wants to change the government of a city and wishes it to become accepted and to be able to maintain it to everyone's satisfaction, must retain at least the shadow of the old customs, so that to the peoples it does not appear that they have changed institutions, even though as a matter of fact the new institutions may be radically different from the previous ones: because all human beings feed themselves as much on what appears as on what is; actually, they often act more for what appears than for what is. … Since novelties change people's minds, you should figure out how those changes can retain as much as possible of the old: and if the magistrates change in number, authority, and period of office compared to

'Invention' and 'innovation' have also been distinguished as two discrete steps in other studies of the ancient world. For example, in his 2009 article 'Inventors, invention, and attitudes towards technology and innovation', Kevin Greene analyzes the attitudes to invention and innovation in Greek and Roman writers and urges a separation of the categories of 'invention' and 'innovation' based on the case study of glass:

> Glass is the best example of significant technological change in an industrial product in classical times, and it illustrates the care with which terms need to be used to distinguish between invention and innovation.[6]

In the field of social innovation and economics the term 'innovation' is mostly used as a synonym of 'invention', or even to indicate the process leading up to an 'invention', so that innovation may precede invention.[7] However, we shall use our terminology consistently, also for cases of social innovation, where an emphasis on the phase in which something new gets to be accepted is appropriate. As Everett Rogers points out: 'the dominant viewpoint now is that social change is caused by both *invention* (the process by which a new idea is discovered or created) and diffusion, which usually occur sequentially'.[8] By differentiating between invention and innovation we acknowledge that innovation is the result of a dynamic process of embedding change in a temporally defined environment. In this dynamic process, several agents and different agency roles can usefully be distinguished.

3 On Human and Non-human Agency

In a foundational 1998 article published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische reconceptualized human agency as

> a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a

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the old ones, they should at least retain the (old) name'. Machiavelli, *Discorsi* 1.25; the translation is mine, based on the edition by Bausi 2001. The *editio princeps* of *Discorsi* appeared in Rome in 1531 with Antonio Blado (see Machiavelli 1531).

6 Greene 2009: 812.

7 E.g., for economics, Mazzucato 2018: 191–206; for social innovation, Cels et al. 2012.

8 Rogers 2003: 43 (emphasis original). In spite of this preliminary distinction, Rogers' monograph predominantly uses 'innovation' as a synonym of 'invention'. On Rogers' model, see Section 4 below.

> capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).[9]

This definition encompasses what the authors consider the three constitutive elements of human agency: iteration, projectivity, and practical evaluation, which correspond to the three different temporal orientations of agency—iteration to the past, projectivity to the future, and practical evaluation to the present. According to Emirbayer and Mische, then, human agency is a temporally embedded process of engagement, the result of the dynamic interaction between the individuals' capacity to act and their environment. As the two sociologists put it:

> What, then, is human agency? We define it as *the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations*.[10]

In the last decade, these theoretical reflections on agency have been used, for instance, in the study of ancient religions. In particular, Jörg Rüpke has emphasized the role of agency in defining religion and the role of individual agency in ancient religious transformations: he proposes a model that, instead of relying on evolutionist or cognitive approaches, analyzes religion in terms of its *making*, by starting from the individual's appropriation and creation of religious tradition.[11] This research line shows that cultic agents do not act as representatives of institutional entities or local oligarchies, but as individuals able to act as decision-makers and conscious modifiers of established religious patterns

9 Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 963. A theoretical background on agency from the Enlightenment to the twentieth century is found in Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 964–970. Fundamental to the development of the theory of human agency before Emirbayer and Mische is the work by the structuralists Antony Giddens (Giddens 1976) and William Sewell (Sewell 1992): Giddens stressed that human agency and structure are mutually determined; Sewell elaborated on Giddens' theory by recognizing the agency of social actors, by envisaging change in the concept of structure, and by overcoming the divide between semiotic and materialistic visions of structure (Sewell 1992: 3). On Giddens and Sewell, see also Vanden Broeck-Parant, this volume, Chapter 2, Section 4.

10 Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 970; emphasis original.

11 Rüpke 2015 (see also Rüpke 2018). Rüpke 2015: 348–349 defines religion as the attribution of agency to something beyond the unquestionably plausible. The relationship between ritual and agency had been partially explored already in Chaniotis 2011.

independently from their social position.[12] Moreover, the focus on the collective agency of groups traditionally less connected with active agency—notably women and children—led to a reassessment of women and children in antiquity as human beings who constantly interact with, make sense of, or exercise power in their surroundings.[13] Since this volume investigates agents who are involved in the creation and embedding of something new, that is, agents of change, it primarily focuses on what Emirbayer and Mische define as the 'projective dimension' of agency: its creative dimension, where human agents are not simply reiterating and reproducing past routines, but actively engage in new possibilities of thought and action.[14]

In the case of modern and contemporary social change, given the power of the *status quo*, human agents involved in the innovation process, especially at the beginning of the process, may operate under adverse circumstances: for example, a social innovation may 'threaten to obliterate incumbent interests, interrupt traditional funding pathways, and reassign bureaucratic turf'.[15] As early as 1513 Machiavelli describes the challenges of being a leader of change in the often quoted sixth chapter of *Il Principe*, which is devoted to new principalities.

> And it should be noted that there is no more difficult matter to deal with (*non è cosa più difficile a trattare*), nor one more doubtful in its success (*né più dubbia a riuscire*), nor more dangerous to conduct (*né più pericolosa a maneggiare*), than to set up as a leader in introducing new orders (*che farsi capo a introdurre nuovi ordini*). For the initiator (*l'introduttore*) will have as enemies all those who are doing well under the old order, and as tepid supporters all those who would do well under the new order. Such tepidness arises partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the laws on their side, partly from the incredulity of human beings, who do not truly believe in a new thing until they had a solid experience of it. The result is that whenever the opposers have the chance to attack, they do so as partisans (*partigianamente*), while those others defend tepidly

12 Gasparini 2021: 42.

13 Vuolanto 2017 on children's agency in the Roman world; Oegema 2021 on filial agency in New Testament and Early Rabbinic parables; Canevaro 2018 on Homeric women's agency: combining Gender Theory and New Materialism, Canevaro demonstrates that Homeric women are well-versed users of objects to express and negotiate their agency. Burke 2012 focuses on religious women's agency in the contemporary religious world.

14 Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 983–994.

15 Cels et al. 2012: 6.

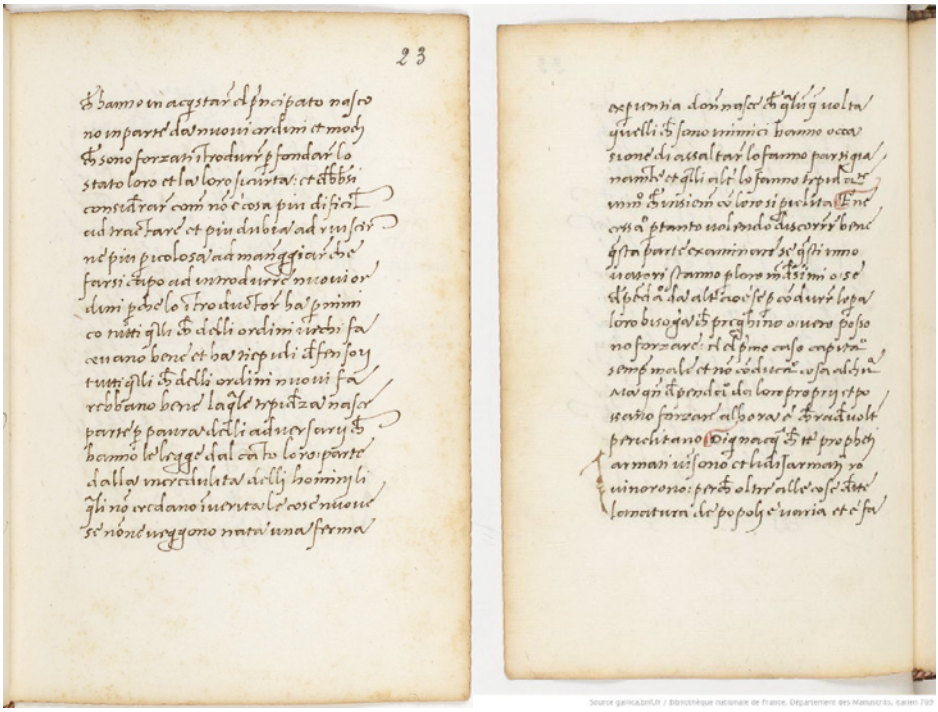

FIGURE 0.1 BNF MS It. 709, fol. 23 r–v
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(*tiepidamente*); so that, together with them, one runs extreme risk (*in modo che insieme con loro si periclita*).[16]

Successful agents of change are thus not merely men or women with a vision: they should be able to anticipate resistance to change and adapt their plan accordingly. To that end, the ability of improvisation plays a crucial role.[17] To cite the authors of *Agents of Change: Strategy and Tactics for Social Innovation*,

16 Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, cap. 6; the translation is mine, based on the edition by Inglese 2013. *Il Principe* appeared posthumously in 1532 with Giunta in Florence. The MS of Fig. 1 (MS It. 709 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8577522q/f57.item#, accessed 7 July 2022) is not an autograph of the author, but is among the MSS drafted probably before his death in 1527. It was owned by Biagio Buonaccorsi, friend and colleague of the author; see Inglese 2017: 139. An analysis of Machiavelli's idea of innovation in Godin 2015: 58–72 (this passage in Godin 2015: 61–62).

17 On the relevance of creative improvisation, see Versluys and Sluiter 2023.

contemporary 'innovators … need to combine the deep strategies of chess masters with the quick tactics of acrobats'.[18]

However, not only human agents play a role in the process of change. Since the early 90s of the twentieth century, the concept of agency has been expanded to include non-human animals and non-living things as well. In 1991 the sociologist Bruno Latour coined the term *actants* to indicate both human and non-human agents which, operating in networks, together drive social and technological change.[19] Moreover, after the 1998 seminal work *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* by Alfred Gell,[20] in the last two decades the 'material turn'[21] in the study of the ancient world has brought object agency to the fore. Gell highlights the relevance of objects as social agents, yet he also adheres to the distinction between primary and secondary agents, the latter indicating 'artefacts through which primary agents distribute their agency in the causal milieu, and thus render their agency effective'.[22] Other scholars in various fields, on the other hand, attribute actual independent agency to objects, arguing that objects possess their own agency and are subjects in their own right. The more radical claim comes from vital materialists such as Jane Bennett, who grant objects an 'energetic, free agency' of their own, comparable to that of human beings.[23] Cognitive archaeologist Lambros Malafouris champions the material engagement approach, arguing that 'agency is not a permanent feature or property that someone (human or non-human) has independently of situated action, but the emergent product of material engagement' and that things have 'a full-blown cognitive life of their own'.[24] To remain in the field of archaeology, Ian Hodder's 'Entanglement Theory' pioneers the

18 Cels et al. 2012: 11.

19 Latour 1991; a refinement of the agent-network theory in Latour 2005. On Latour's theory, see also McNeill, this volume, Chapter 1. Latour's agent-network theory is used in the context of Greek festivals by van Vliet and van Nijf, this volume, Chapter 3. On network theory, a seminal work is Granovetter 1973 (on which see below, Section 4, n. 33).

20 Gell 1998. See also van Eck 2015.

21 On the 'material turn', see Hicks 2010. Further bibliography on the 'material turn', or new materialism, and its impact on historical studies will be found in van Vliet and van Nijf, this volume, Chapter 3.

22 Gell 1998: 20. A distinction between primary and secondary agents still seems to be implied in the terminology used by Lambros Malafouris, who distinguishes 'conscious agency' from 'agency or agentive capacity' (Malafouris 2013: 214) and describes material agency as 'things have a causal efficacy in human thought and action' (Malafouris 2018: 757). Malafouris argues for a material engagement approach that allows for a dynamic reciprocal relationship between brains, bodies, and things and coins the term 'thinging' to that end (Malafouris 2018: 764–767).

23 Bennett 2010: 61. On Jane Bennett's theory see also McNeill, this volume, Chapter 1.

24 Malafouris 2018: 766–767.

entanglement of human and objects.[25] On the same line, Martin Pitts and Miguel John Versluys have pointed to the way in which objects exercise agency by connecting people and places and creating relationships between them, and they have introduced the concept of 'objectscape' for an environment in which humans and things are intricately connected.[26] From an archaeological and ethnographical perspective, food and drink have likewise been interpreted as '*embodied* material culture' possessing agency.[27] Finally, object agency has also attracted attention in the study of ancient literature, for instance in Melissa Müller's *Objects as Actors* for Greek tragedy and Lilah Canevaro's *Women of Substance* for Homeric epic.[28]

The role of non-human agency in human history will be explored by John McNeill in Chapter 1 in this volume and other examples will be provided in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. I shall therefore limit myself here to one concrete example of object agency, used in consumption and consumer studies: the so-called 'Diderot effect'.[29] In his *Regrets sur ma vieille robe de chambre* (1772) the French philosopher Denis Diderot (1713–1784) illustrates how the gift of a beautiful scarlet dressing gown led him to replace most of his furniture as no longer in line with the style and the beauty of his new item: while he declared himself master of his old dressing gown, he eventually became a slave to his new one.[30] The 'Diderot effect' describes how, when a familiar consumption pattern is disrupted, by a fine gift for example, individuals will seek to establish a new pattern of consumption which conforms to the level of quality and status represented by the gift. In such cases, objects may be interpreted as 'agents' of change—I shall come back to this issue of interpretation in the conclusion of this introduction. Further cases of non-human agency will be explored in this volume, notably in the first three chapters: it will become apparent to the reader that the authors of this volume hold different views on the acceptability of the notion of non-human agency, and will defend their points of view in their chapters. Finally, it is worth highlighting here that the term 'agent' will be

25 Hodder 2019.

26 Pitts and Versluys 2021; on 'object genealogy', 371–374.

27 In these terms, Welton 2017: 612–613 (emphasis original), based on Dietler 2001. Welton extends to the Hebrew Bible Dietler's ethnographic perspective on food and drinks.

28 Müller 2016 and Canevaro 2018. The two scholars, however, disagree on the level of independence of object agency, with Müller inclined to grant more independent agency to objects and Canevaro 2018: 20–21 arguing that objects in literature have *per se* secondary agency. A discussion and further bibliography on object agency in Classics in Canevaro 2018: 20–28.

29 Lorenzen 2015. I owe this example to Miguel John Versluys.

30 Diderot 1772: 9: 'J'étois le maitre [sic] absolu de ma vieille robe de chambre, je suis devenu l'esclave de la nouvelle'.

employed in this volume in a general way, to indicate any entity—biologically alive or not—that can be granted agency. Other fields of study, however, prefer other terms for human agents, such as *actors*.[31]

4 Human Agency in Adopting and Spreading Change: Contemporary Models of Diffusion of Innovation

In the study of the ancient and early modern world, most of the agents that the evidence allows us to single out are human, and therefore so are most of the agents discussed in this volume. For some of them we have only a name, while sometimes even that is controversial, as in the case of the architect of the fourth-century-BCE temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus considered in Chapter 2.[32] For others we can reconstruct specific features and contexts, as in the case of Cicero in Chapter 6, John Cassian in Chapter 8, or Erasmus in Chapter 10. In considering such human agents involved in historical processes of change, contemporary models of diffusion of innovation may be helpful in questions of typology and different agency roles, and in questions of the process leading from invention to embedded innovation. In the social sciences, such models have been designed since the early 1960s.[33] The most influential one stems from the seminal monograph *Diffusion of Innovations* by Everett Rogers, first published in 1962.[34]

In his monograph Rogers, professor of Communication Studies, is thinking primarily about market development. He analyzes the diffusion of innovations through a process of (gradual) adoption and classifies the adopters according to their innovativeness.

> The individuals in a social system do not all adopt an innovation at the same time. Rather, they adopt in an over-time sequence, so that individuals can be classified into adopter categories on the basis of when

31 For example, in the field of economics/finance, Mariana Mazzucato uses the term *actors*, possibly in order to distinguish the general role of 'agency' from the actual 'agents' employed in the financial sector; e.g., Mazzucato 2018: 195.

32 See Vanden Broeck-Parant, Chapter 2, Section 2.

33 For an overview of the history of diffusion research, see Rogers 2003: 39–101, with critical discussion in Rogers 2003: 102–135. A specific field of diffusion research is that of diffusion networks, with a fundamental contribution in Granovetter 1973. A review of the studies on diffusion networks in Rogers 2003: 300–364 (339–341 on Granovetter).

34 Rogers' monograph has been revised up to the fifth edition of 2003, which I shall use in this introduction.

> they first begin using a new idea. We could describe each individual adopter in a system in terms of his or her time of adoption, but … it is much more efficient to use *adopter categories*, the classification of members of a system on the basis of their innovativeness. … Innovativeness indicates overt behavioral change, the ultimate goal of most diffusion programs, rather than just cognitive or attitudinal change. Innovativeness is the bottom-line behavior in the diffusion process.[35]

In the process of diffusion, Rogers distinguishes 'innovators', that is the individuals at the beginning of the process—called 'inventors' or instigators of change in our terminology—and several categories of adopters: early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Such classification into five adopter categories derives by laying off standard deviations from the average time of adoption.[36] In the resulting model, in a given system the innovators represent the first 2.5% of individuals, the early adopters the next 13.5%, the early majority the next 34%, the late majority the next 34%, and the laggards the final 16%. Within the rate of adoption there is a moment where the diffusion of an innovation reaches critical mass. According to Rogers, the critical mass occurs at the point at which enough individuals in a system have adopted the innovation so that the innovation's further rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining.[37] Rogers defines as 'change agents' the individuals who 'influence clients' innovation-decision in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency'.[38] 'Change agents' thus have a role of mediators, usually distinguished in Rogers' model from initiators and early adopters. In this volume, on the other hand, 'agents of change' will be used in a more general way to indicate any entity that can be granted agency in bringing about change.

Rogers' theories were popularized by the journalist and science writer Malcolm Gladwell in his book *The Tipping Point* (2000).[39] Gladwell draws an analogy between innovations and epidemics, which at a critical moment start spreading exponentially. Innovations, too, need to reach critical mass (what he

35 Rogers 2003: 267–268 (emphasis original).

36 The visualization of the adopter categorization on the basis of their innovativeness and the classification into five adopter categories are found in Rogers 2003: 280–285.

37 Rogers 2003: 343–364. The concept of critical mass originated in physics, where it was defined as the amount of radioactive material necessary to produce a nuclear reaction; the history of the concept in Rogers 2003: 349–352.

38 Rogers 2003: 27; 365–401.

39 Gladwell 2000; the book is an expanded version of Gladwell's article published in *The New Yorker*; see Gladwell 1996. Gladwell 2000 has been reprinted as paperback edition by Back Bay, New York, in 2002.

calls a 'tipping point') to become successful. They are 'social epidemics', cultural phenomena that spread through society. But before reaching a tipping point, social epidemics need some different kinds of exceptional individuals, defined by Gladwell as 'connectors, mavens, and salesmen' in his chapter 'The Law of the Few'.[40] They are the kind of exceptional people who are able to start social epidemics because of their natural ability to create a network (the connectors), make a case for an idea (the mavens), or sell a product (the salesmen). Gladwell explores the fascinating world of social epidemics, drawing examples ranging from Paul Revere's ride in 1775—during which Revere warned thousands of people throughout Massachusetts about the impending invasion of British troops—to Sesame Street and the world of fashion. Both Rogers' ideas about instigators and people who adopt innovation at different speeds, and Gladwell's categories of connectors, mavens, and salesmen, have been used as a source of inspiration by our authors.

Another relevant concept, not used explicitly by either Rogers or Gladwell, but implied in their models, is that of 'cultural broker', a concept introduced by anthropologists in the late 1940s and 1950s.[41] For example, the 'invention' may be an idiosyncratic type of sneakers and the 'inventors' a group of cool kids in Manhattan. But before those sneakers are *adopted* by the public at large, thus becoming a successful innovation, they need to be *adapted* to the taste of the majority. This happens by tweaking the invention, highlighting some of its aspects, downplaying other aspects, and thus making a more coherent form that can be more easily assimilated to the culture of the majority.[42]

The role of 'cultural brokers' and the need to adapt the invention in order to have it adopted by the majority point to the agents who 'anchor' the invention. While we highlight the importance of 'anchoring' as a crucial factor in successful innovation, Rogers acknowledges within his model a related, though not identical, factor, which he calls *compatibility*, a factor that may reduce 'client uncertainty'. Compatibility is defined by Rogers as 'the degree to which an

40 Gladwell 2002: 30–88.

41 See the foundational article by Wolf 1956. The notion of cultural brokerage is implied in Rogers' 'change agent' (2003: 365–401), and in Gladwell's reference to the individuals who can 'translate the message of the innovators into something the rest of us can understand' (2002: 203). An overview of the studies on cultural brokerage in several disciplines in Baron 2021: 65–70. On the use of the concept of cultural brokerage for historians of late antiquity such as Jordanes and Cassiodorus, see Reimitz 2014. The same role could be extended to most Jewish writers in Greek, who negotiated Judean literature and culture with values, discourse, and style of the Greco-Roman age; for the historian Josephus in particular: see Glas 2020 on the *Judean War*; on Josephus' biblical history, see Castelli, forthcoming.

42 Gladwell 2002: 213.

innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters'.[43] According to Rogers, an innovation can be compatible or incompatible (1) with sociocultural values and beliefs, (2) with previously introduced ideas, or (3) with client needs for innovation.[44] Compatibility, however, is a static concept, which refers to a given situation. The concept of 'anchoring', on the other hand, is dynamic. It refers to a process or purposeful activity and allows more conceptual room for the fact that 'becoming anchored' is a matter of societal negotiation.[45] Some ancient figures whose role is comparable to that of cultural brokers are Lactantius in Chapter 7 and John Cassian in Chapter 8.

The memorability of a message likewise plays a key role in sparking social epidemics. That is what Gladwell calls *The Stickiness Factor*:[46] the structure and format of the introduction of a new idea can dramatically enhance its memorability. In this volume we shall see some cases—notably in Chapter 5 by Albert Joosse, Chapter 8 by Nienke Vos, and Chapter 10 by Raf Van Rooy—where the form of the message itself contributed crucially to the success of the innovation.

A final, important factor in originating and spreading change is what Gladwell calls 'The Power of Context'.[47] Gladwell bases his theory on studies of change in behavior prompted by the social context, which show how a specific context can produce dramatic, sudden, and unexpected changes in people's behavior, both positive and negative. For example, he recalls the 1973 experiment by the psychologists John Darley and Daniel Batson with some students of the Princeton Theological Seminary, which demonstrated that conviction of heart and actual contents of thoughts were less important in prompting the students' behavior than the immediate context.[48] Gladwell's 'Law of the Few',

43 Rogers 2003: 15–16, 240.

44 Rogers 2003: 241–249. In Rogers 2003: 375, 'compatibility' with clients' needs is a key factor in the success of a change agent.

45 Sluiter 2017: 31–34.

46 Gladwell 2002: 89–132; Heath and Heath 2007.

47 Gladwell 2002: 133–192.

48 Gladwell 2002: 163–168, based on Darley and Batson 1973. In that study, the influence of several situational and personality variables on helping behavior was examined in an emergency situation suggested by the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29–37). Students going between two buildings encountered a shabbily dressed person slumped by the side of the road. Some students were going to give a short talk on the parable of the Good Samaritan, others on a different topic; this made no significant difference in the likelihood of their giving the victim help. However, the experiment made apparent that students in a hurry to reach their destination were more likely to pass by without

'Stickiness Factor', and 'Power of Context' all play a role in innovation processes and are taken into account by most of the authors of this volume.

Rogers' model of diffusion of innovation, implemented and popularized by Gladwell, shows how an 'invention' may become a successful innovation thanks to the role of some exceptional human agents and their message, the relevance of a specific context, and a basic principle of epidemics—exponential growth. However, while the modern model is very helpful for studying ancient material, there are also differences between modern and ancient conceptions of innovation. For instance, in Rogers' and Gladwell's models inventors do not play a prominent role, while the ancient tended to attach great importance to 'first inventors'. This is evident not only from the impact of real inventors such as Archimedes, Ctesibius, Vitruvius, or Heron of Alexandria in technology and science,[49] but even more so from the many stories about inventors and inventions. If an inventor—a *prôtos heuretês* (πρῶτος εὑρετής)—was unknown, stories were created to fill that vacuum.[50] On the other hand, in modern theory, the models of diffusion of innovations rather focus on the agents involved in the process of adoption and on diffusion networks.[51] While the concepts of early adoption and early majority originate from the social and technical sciences, they have now been supplemented by terms like 'spreader' and 'superspreader' deriving from epidemiology, and they have latterly been applied to a wide range of fields: Network Sciences, Life Sciences, and Exact Sciences.[52] Raf Van Rooy, in Chapter 10 in this volume, uses the concept of superspreader to explore Erasmus' role in the diffusion of New Ancient Greek.

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stopping; on the other hand, the 'good Samaritans' to the man—that is those who stopped to provide help—were the students who were in less of a hurry.

49 See Greene 2009.

50 E.g., the inventor of the lyre in the traditions attested since the fourth Homeric hymn (see Romani Mistretta 2017); on Epicharmus and Simonides as 'inventors' of some letters of the Greek alphabet, see Willi 2013. A fundamental investigation on *prôtos heuretês* is still Thraede 1962.

51 In diffusion networks, opinion leadership plays a central role. See Rogers 2003: 300–364.

52 An overview of the studies on early adoption behavior can be found in Fisher and Price 1992. On the relevance of the human factor in technological adoption, especially the relevance of the early adopters' needs for distinctiveness, see Catalini and Tucker 2016. On the phenomenon of 'superspreading' in Epidemiology, see Galvani and May 2005; specifically, on the role of superspreaders in Covid-19, see Beldomenico 2020, Majra et al. 2021. On Network Sciences, see, e.g., Pei et al. 2014 on the role of superspreaders of information in the social media; Radicchi and Castellano 2017 on the definition of superspreaders in systemic networks. For an example of superspreaders in Life Sciences, see McKay and Hoye 2016 on migratory animals. An overview on the application of superspreader in colloidal sciences is found in Sankaran et al. 2019.

Now that we have provided a basic explanation of Rogers' and Gladwell's models of diffusion of innovation, and other terms used in models of diffusion, a major question emerges: can contemporary models and their terminology legitimately be used for the study of the ancient world? Several issues should be addressed before using modern theories in the study of the ancient world. Contemporary theories are themselves products of specific social, cultural, and historical environments, with all their complexity; moreover, the ancient world was itself a place of major diversity.[53] Thus, one cannot without further ado 'apply' modern concepts to ancient contexts. However, modern theories can offer a valid heuristic tool to bring new perspectives to the ancient world.[54] In this volume modern categories found in the models of diffusion of innovation will be used as a 'diagnostic tool'—without essentializing or reifying them or positing their universal validity—to investigate the dynamics of generating, spreading, and anchoring change. Our authors will discuss points of agreement and divergence between modern theories and ancient case studies in their individual chapters, and their evaluation will eventually contribute to stress the specificities of change agency in each peculiar context. I shall come back to this point in the conclusion (Section 6).

5 The Content of This Volume

The following ten chapters study agents involved in purposeful change in specific circumstances from the fourth century BCE to the early sixteenth century CE. The opening chapter, by John McNeill, offers a theoretical discussion of agency. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the role of non-human agents, as well as human ones; from Chapter 4 onwards, the focus is mainly on human agency. This difference coincides with the transition from primarily historical and archaeological approaches, to more text-based chapters (literature, philosophy, and cultural studies). The chapters follow an approximately chronological order.

In *Mosquitoes, Molecules, and Megafauna: Who and What has Agency in Human History?* John McNeill discusses the nature of agency and gradations of agency that may be credited to several non-human entities in human history. While 'agents' cause things to happen, or contribute to historical causation, McNeill points out that they do not need to be human, and they do not need to have intent or will. McNeill credits with strong agency the female mosquitoes of the species *Aedes Aegypti*, primary vectors of the yellow fever, and of malaria-bearing *Anopheles*, because they both played a relevant role in, for

53 Sluiter 2020: 7.

54 See McGillivray 1994: 410.

example, the political history of the Caribbean between 1600 and 1900. On the other hand, a weaker agency is ascribed to horses: while their capacity of thermoregulation allowed small populations to build large empires—a fact that would make them 'agents' to some extent—horses were directed by humans, who consciously used them for their goals, unlike mosquitoes. Likewise, a form of weak agency in human history is credited to certain trees species. However, in McNeill's opinion, having agency requires 'someone or something to be able to act'. Hence, he draws the line of agency at (certain) living things, denying agency to material things that lack that capacity.

The following two chapters, by contrast, do make a case for extending agency to material objects, and show how human agents and objects can be effectually entangled in the process of innovation. In Chapter 2, *Builders, Architects, and the Power of Context: Agents of Architectural Change in Fourth-century-BCE Epidaurus and Delphi*, Jean Vanden Broeck-Parant highlights the interaction and interconnectedness of multiple human agents, the role of institutions, of material agency, and of competition in the architectural innovations in fourth-century-BCE Epidaurus and Delphi. Several human agents were involved in the construction of monumental buildings: commissioners, architects, contractors, guarantors, and workers. Among them, the role of architects as agents of architectural change in terms of design is especially notable; yet, roles were sometimes fluid, as architects could also be entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs, for their part, had the opportunity to implement new techniques and methods based on their skill and experience, and to work as 'connectors'. Vanden Broeck-Parant studies the introduction of a new type of clamp—the Π-clamp—an excellent case study to highlight the entanglement of humans, institutions, and objects in a successful innovation and to point to the role of competition. While its implementation called for the synergy of agents—entrepreneurs, architects, and building commissioners, in a collective human agency—the success of this specific type of clamp needs as an additional explanation the agency of key materials such as stone and metal, as their physical properties dictated the use of specific shapes of clamps. Moreover, since the new clamp was cheaper than other available types, it was more attractive for the entrepreneurs, and gave them an edge within the competitive system of bid solicitations—the system mostly used for building contracts in the classical and Hellenistic world. Vanden Broeck-Parant interprets the competitive system of bid solicitations as 'the main *structuring* rule that enabled agents to exert their creativity, in turn favoring the adoption and diffusion of the Π-clamp'.[55]

55 Chapter 2, p. 62.

An analogous theoretical line is followed in Chapter 3, *Agents of Change around the Valley of the Muses*. Taking the contests in Thespiae (Boeotia) as a case study, Robin van Vliet and Onno van Nijf show how from the first century BCE onwards both human and non-human agents were intertwined in integrating Rome in the framework of the Thespian contests. Human agency is here represented *in primis* by festival organizers, often members of a small circle of local elite families, who used the pre-existing festival infrastructures to create links with the Italian community and anchor Roman presence in traditional practice, and in so doing simultaneously secured their own local status and position under Rome. Moreover, participants and spectators likewise played a decisive role in subscribing to and disseminating the new political order these contests stood for: they helped build solidarity with fellow Greeks, while simultaneously gaining large-scale support for the acknowledgement—and anchoring—of Rome's position on Greek soil. The chapter, moreover, explores the potential of object agency in historical studies and the importance of understanding the complex dynamics of entanglement between human and non-human agents in processes of anchoring and change: in fact, architectural structures—like theaters—and specific objects—such as statues, and particularly a famous statue of Eros—had a decisive influence on the human interactions that underpinned the relationship between Thespiae and Rome.

The role of competition, already highlighted by Vanden Broeck-Parant for fourth-century-BCE Delphi and Epidaurus, is further investigated by Brett Evans in Chapter 4 in the context of the Ptolemaic court. In *Callimachus vs. Conon: Competing Agents of Change for the Lock of Berenice*, Evans challenges the *communis opinio* that points to the collaboration of Conon and Callimachus to orchestrate the catasterism of Berenice's Lock. Rather, he argues that Callimachus and Conon were competing agents. Evans' interpretation takes into account the fundamental pressure constantly faced by members of Hellenistic court society to prove their worth and hence compete for status. In this case study the successful innovation—the catasterism of Berenice's Lock—is thus the cumulative product of a specific type of competition.

Chapter 5 bears the title *Anonymizing Agents of Change in Philosophical Pseudepigraphy: The Case of Pseudo-Plato, De Virtute*. Here, Albert Joosse presents anonymization as a strategy employed by the author of the pseudo-Platonic dialogue to reduce resistance to philosophical innovation. In this case the author—the agent of change—chooses to conceal his own agency with the specific goal of integrating his innovative work more smoothly and unobtrusively into the Platonic corpus. He reaches this goal by constantly pointing in his text to the Platonic corpus, with systematic references to Plato's *Meno*, a common ground to which his intended readers are already committed. This

authorial self-effacement in *De virtute* functions as an anchoring strategy for the successful introduction of change.

Chapters 6–8 also investigate the role of human agents, this time by explicitly using the categories and terminology found in the models of diffusion of innovation discussed in Section 4 above. In Chapter 6, *Cicero and Political Agency in Late-Republican Rome*, Merlijn Breunesse and Lidewij van Gils consider both Cicero's awareness of the relevant factors needed to create a major impact in a political context and his own role as agent during the conflict between Octavian and Mark Antony. Cicero showed strong awareness of the key elements highlighted in modern theories of diffusion of innovations as essential to bring about political and social change, such as the importance of the right moment and of having a memorable message. Moreover, he displayed the qualities of a maven and had a high potential as a successful connector and salesman, due to his network and rhetorical skills. However, his firm belief in the value of the *res publica* restrained him from fully developing these roles. Finally, the authors argue that the political turmoil of 44–43 BCE should not be seen as a conflict between one innovative party trying to enforce a change and a conservative party merely resisting this change. Rather, they propose to analyze it as a tug of war, in which two conflicting parties attempt to convince a majority of their ideas. According to this interpretation, Cicero could represent an agent of change insofar as he was advocating a movement that, although anchored in traditional ideas, was revolutionary and countered the tendency towards dictatorship.

In Chapter 7, *Primus Juvencus and Other Agents of Change in the Rise of Christian Latin Poetry*, Roald Dijkstra focuses on the role of some early Christian Latin poets in the creation and affirmation of a specifically Christian poetry. In particular, through the use of Rogers' and Gladwell's models of diffusion of innovations he shifts the interpretation of the role of Juvencus from that of initiator, by which he is commonly described, to that of 'early adopter' (and anchoring agent) of ideas promoted during the reign of Constantine. To that end, Dijkstra sets Juvencus in the broad context of early Christian poetry and analyzes the roles played by some predecessors and contemporaries of Juvencus and by some of his successors. If Commodian was a real innovator, his failure to anchor his poetry in Christian or traditional literary culture hindered the success of his verses. Lactantius seems to have functioned as a cultural broker, as he contributed to making the very idea of Christian poetry acceptable, and Optatian picked up on Lactantius' ideas and took advantage of them. Constantine, on the other hand, played a crucial role in the success of the innovation: he was the perfect 'connector', because of his political influence; moreover, his *Oration to the saints* worked as the best imaginable

promotion for Christian poetry, and paved the way for Juvencus. The key role of Juvencus as an early adopter implies that he found a way to combine an orthodox and purely Christian subject-matter with the style and form appreciated by less strict Christians, in accordance to standards of poetry developed during Constantine's reign. Thus, he paved the way for further developments under bishop Damasus.

In Chapter 8, *John Cassian as an Agent of Change*, Nienke Vos presents the results of an experiment: reading the life and work of John Cassian through the lens of Rogers' and Gladwell's models to explain Cassian's agency in (re-)inventing and propagating an ethically focused, psychologically sophisticated, and well-regulated brand of monasticism in early Christian Gaul. This experiment enables Vos to identify important factors that contributed to Cassian's success as an agent of change who profoundly influenced the course of Christian monasticism in the West. Cassian had an exceptional network across the Mediterranean world, developed through his diplomatic missions and first-hand experience of monasticism in Palestine and Egypt. He was a born teacher, focusing in his writings on narrative structure and vivid details, emotion and repetition, compelling dialogue and authoritative texts, metaphors and anecdotes. In bringing Eastern monasticism to the West, he was versatile at adapting Evagrius' thought to make it more accessible, while adding touches of his own. All these elements point to Cassian as an initiator, an early adopter, and a spreader of Western monasticism, but also as a cultural broker, a bridge between East and West, in his successful anchoring of Western monasticism in the traditions of Egyptian, Origenistic, and Evagrian spirituality.

The last two chapters engage with agents of change in the humanistic tradition. Chapter 9 is entitled *Greek-Latin Translation at the Court of Pope Nicholas v (r. 1447–1455): The Agents that Changed the Humanist Translation Movement*. Annet den Haan takes the translation movement under pope Nicholas v as her case study. Under this exceptional pontiff, not only did the production of translations increase, but the movement was transformed into a coordinated program. The patron played the key role, not only in sponsoring the movement, but also in being actively involved in the process by selecting Greek texts for translation, assigning them to translators, providing Greek source texts, and even practicing quality control. In this case study, too, we see collective agency: the intellectual network of humanists at the court of Nicholas v—translators, assistants, readers, and critics—contributed to the transformation of the translation movement, as did the cardinals, such as Bessarion, who functioned as social and literary intermediaries. Moreover, the context of the literary infrastructure in fifteenth-century Rome, especially the newly established Vatican library—a non-human agent in its own right

according to den Haan—both facilitated and shaped the translation movement. A notable observation is on the role of competition. While in Chapters 2 and 4 competition worked as an incentive to innovation, in this chapter competition seems to have eventually hindered the success of innovation, since it often led to rivalries and broken careers of some of the scholars involved in the translation movement.

In Chapter 10, *Erasmus, an Unsuspected Superspreader of New Ancient Greek?*, Raf Van Rooy addresses the issue of diffusion of New Ancient Greek, that is the practice of composing new works in the language of the ancient Greeks, in sixteenth-century elite culture. While Greek and Italian scholars—such as Theodore Gaza, Janus Lascaris, Marcus Musurus, Francesco Filelfo, and Angelo Poliziano—may be considered the 'inventors' of New Ancient Greek, Erasmus acted as an early adopter and spreader, and possibly as a superspreader, in spite of his limited production. He did so by promoting New Ancient Greek among a broader circle of scholars across Europe, notably in the Swiss Confederacy and the Low Countries. Erasmus' role was motivated by his Christian Hellenism, mobility and network, as well as by the visibility and high circulation of his poems. The specific context of the early sixteenth century likewise played an important role in the spreading of New Ancient Greek: the printing press afforded the production and circulation of accessible Greek manuals; the first Greek chairs were institutionalized in Alcalá de Henares (1514) and Leuven (1517), followed by Wittenberg (1518) and Paris (1530); and the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* guaranteed an enduring interest in studying and using Greek in a Christian context. Although human agency is surely the most prominent factor in explaining the diffusion of New Ancient Greek, Van Rooy also suggests a role for non-human agents: Erasmus' poems were themselves agents in the sense that they invited people to do something with them—to recite and perform them—and the growing elegance of the typographical fonts used for Erasmus' poems may have stimulated the New Ancient Greek fashion in the sense that poems in this language became an appealing adornment of books.

6 Conclusion

In the first section of this General Introduction, I formulated five broad problems with which the case studies in this volume engage. Each of the following chapters contributes to a better understanding of specific issues in the study of intentional change in the ancient and early modern periods. But collectively, they also throw light on large questions about agency and innovation.

(1) Who and/or what has agency? In particular, to what degree, and to what extent can agency be extended to non-human beings and things? This topic is explored throughout the volume. Several chapters explore some sort of agency for non-human beings or entities: the female mosquitoes of *Aedes Aegypti* and *Anopheles* in Chapter 1, the materials used for a special clamp in Chapter 2, theaters and statues in Chapter 3, the Vatican Library in Chapter 9, and the fonts of early printing in Chapter 10. However, although everyone agrees that some non-human factors may influence innovation, there is a clear difference in interpreting the degree of material agency between disciplines—with archaeologists and ancient historians being more inclined towards independent agency; moreover, different views are embraced by different scholars also within the same discipline.[56] If a possible way to reconcile these differences in the studies of the ancient and early modern world would be to maintain some distinction between primary and secondary agency, as in Alfred Gell's interpretation of material agency,[57] an even more fruitful way forwards is to focus on two very promising concepts in the study of the material world, affordances and entanglement: these concepts, which have been used to explain the case studies of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 in this volume,[58] bring us to our second point.

(2) Our second question concerned the relationship between individual and collective agency, and the relevance of competition, synergy, and entanglement of agents in an innovation. As our chapters show, individual and collective agency are often intertwined in reaching a successful innovation, and synergy, entanglement, and competition can frequently be identified as determining factors. As Jörg Rüpke puts it in his seminal article on religious agency, 'it is not the individual who "has" agency, but in dealing with the structural context in a given situation the individual acts agentically'.[59] To begin with competition: in Chapter 2 the competitive system of bid solicitations contributed to prompt the innovation of

56 See Müller 2016 and Canevaro 2018 on the role of object agency in Greek literature; above, Section 3, n. 28.

57 See above, Section 3.

58 'Affordances', a term that goes back to James Gibson (notably, Gibson 1979), is defined as 'the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used' by Donald Norman (Norman 1988: 9; cf. Norman 2013: 10–13). More on the concept of affordances and its use in Chapter 2, Section 4 and Chapter 3, Section 1, this volume. On entanglement, see Hodder 2019, and Pitts and Versluys 2021, discussed above in Section 3; and Chapter 3, Section 1, this volume.

59 Rüpke 2015: 351.

the new clamp; in Chapter 4, Callimachus and Conon acted as competing agents for the catasterism of Berenice's Lock.[60] These same cases, however, also point to synergy, co-operation, or entanglement of agents in a temporally defined context: the use of the Π-clamp in fourth-century-BCE Epidaurus and Delphi in Chapter 2 was subject to the approval of all parties involved—in a synergetic action of human agents—and the materials themselves had agentive force by prompting the use of a specific shape of clamp—in an entanglement of human and non-human agency. In Chapter 4, although the catasterism is mainly the product of competing agents (Conon and Callimachus) in Evans' interpretation, their competition can be defined in terms of 'co-opetition',[61] i.e. a competition which involves some sort of collaboration. In Chapter 3, organizers and institutions of the Thespian contests, participants and spectators, as well as architectural forms and objects all interact to firmly anchor the presence and position of Rome in the Greek context, in a unique entanglement of human and non-human agency. Once again, each case should be pondered to detect to what extent an innovation is the product of cooperation, synergy, and competition. Moreover, while undoubtedly specific human agents can play a distinctive role in bringing about a change, often individual agency interacts with collective agency: in Chapter 2 architects and entrepreneurs cooperate with local institutions; in Chapter 3 institutions and spectators act as a collective body mostly without a name; in Chapter 5, the individual agent—the author of the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *De virtute*—purposely chooses to efface his own agency in favor of a collective referent, the Platonic corpus; in Chapter 9 the individual translators interact (and compete) with the numerous agents at the court of Nicholas V, such as the other translators, the cardinals, and the pope.

(3) The third issue identified in Section 1 was the relationship between agency and power. Not unexpectedly: they are strictly connected. In bringing about a successful innovation, the agency of rulers or otherwise powerful agents (powerful in the widest sense of the word) wins the day. That is apparent, for example, in Chapter 7 in the case of Constantine and bishop Damasus, who both promoted Christian poetry by quoting or composing verse themselves, and in Chapter 9, where pope Nicholas V exercised active agency on the translation movement, for instance by choosing the works to be translated. The close connection between agency

60 However, excessive competition can become detrimental, as shown by some examples within the translation movement under pope Nicholas V in Chapter 9.

61 On the concept of co-opetition, see Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1996.

and power is also in evidence with some members of prominent families and leading figures of the ancient and early modern world, such as Polycratides in Chapter 3 and Erasmus in Chapter 10. Polycratides and his family were instrumental in initiating and maintaining different kinds of ties with Rome and with the various layers of the Roman population in Thespiae. And the example of Erasmus, as a prominent figure of early sixteenth-century Europe was authoritative and influential.

(4) What are the different roles played by human agents in the process of innovation, and to what extent can modern categories of agency be used for ancient case studies? The studies in this volume make it abundantly clear that categories and roles of agents as proposed by modern theories can offer useful insights to investigate the ancient world. That proves particularly productive where ancient and early modern sources—notably literary sources—provide enough evidence to characterize the human agents involved, their life, network, and impact, as in the case of Cicero in Chapter 6, some of the early Christian poets in Chapter 7, John Cassian in Chapter 8, and Erasmus in Chapter 10. However, such categories and roles should be used without reifying them, as heuristic tools and 'intuition pumps',[62] and with some *caveats*. Even more caution is required when dealing with contemporary concepts such as 'exponential growth', or with 'sudden change' brought about by the context, as argued by Van Rooy in his conclusion of Chapter 10. However, some of the crucial factors related to the context in modern theories of diffusion, such as network and competition, do play a role in antiquity as well, as shown in Chapter 2 in the network of architects, entrepreneurs, and the system of bid solicitations; in Chapter 4, where the Ptolemaic court is shown to have become a hub for the catasterism of Berenice's Lock; or in Chapter 10, where the early sixteenth-century European context, with its intellectual network, was ready for the diffusion of New Ancient Greek.

(5) What different strategies are used by human agents to embed their change in society? Human agents employ different strategies to embed their changes in their specific society. One important result of this volume is that modern theories of diffusion of innovation could profitably add the concept of 'anchoring' to their toolkit. This would enable them to take into account the dynamic nature of societal change and its dependence on the human factor, since ultimately, whatever offers itself as new will have to be accommodated in the cognitive world of people. Anchoring

62 See Dennett 2013 for the term 'intuition pump'.

strategies are a topic in many of our chapters. One of them is the use of traditional names for new institutions proposed by Machiavelli in the passage of *Discorsi* mentioned in Section 2 of this introduction. In the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *De virtute* in Chapter 5, anonymization—that is the authorial self-effacement in favor of the repeated references to Plato's *Meno*—works as a strategy to reduce resistance to philosophical innovation. This last tactic points to another 'anchoring' strategy extensively employed in antiquity: the use of authority, largely attested in ancient Jewish tradition[63] and fundamental in early Christian literature, as pointed out by Nienke Vos in Chapter 8 for the work of John Cassian.

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63 See, e.g., Sommer 2015.

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CHAPTER 1

Mosquitoes, Molecules, and Megafauna: Who and What has Agency in Human History

J.R. McNeill

1 Introduction

Just as historians and other scholars interested in the past must come to grips with new and unfamiliar data and evidence coming from the paleosciences, so we must reckon with more complex ideas of 'agency'. Scholars now are—slowly—getting used to the archives, for example, embedded in Greenland's ice. It records evidence of, among other things, the 7% decline in CO2 emissions in the pandemic year of 2020; the portion of the atomic age that featured above-ground nuclear testing; the rise of coal combustion with the Industrial Revolution; the sharp decline in population in the Americas after 1492; the temporary disappearance of European lead-smelting during the fourteenth-century Black Death; and, well known to classicists, the rise and fall of Roman lead smelting. We now have many accidental archives preserving evidence no human ever planned to preserve, and with that we are fashioning a more comprehensive, and more complicated, sense of the past.

A fuller sense of the past also requires a fuller sense of causation, of agency, of what it is that made things happen as they did. Sometimes that agency may be individual will or genius, as scholars in nineteenth-century Europe often believed; sometimes it may lie in the shared self-interest of some social group, as historians of my generation were taught to believe.[1] But, just as historical evidence and archives are now expanding beyond the written word and the archeologists' middens and monuments, so our concept of agency is expanding to include not just individuals and human groups, but other animals and, indeed, other living and non-living things as well. During a pandemic year in which our collective history is co-authored by the evolutionary behavior of a

1 Sewell 2005 addresses the relationship between individual agency and the power of social structure, especially 143–144. Hornborg 2017 offers a vigorous defense of the idea that only people have agency, arguing that seeing matters otherwise distracts attention from power relations within society and is incompatible with the wisdom of Marx.

virus, it should be easier than ever before to admit that we humans are not fully sovereign over human history.

To accept this expansion of agency one must accept that intent is not a requirement for agency. This should be easy, because much of what people do leads to unintended consequences, and much of what happens was intended by no one. No one wanted a COVID-19 pandemic. Yet people did many things—we don't know precisely who or what—to allow a bat virus to become a human virus. No one wanted World War I. People can be unwitting and unintentional agents of historical change through random actions. And if humans can do that, why not the random actions of non-humans such as viruses? Or mosquitoes, molecules, and megafauna?

2 Some Agents of New Thinking about Agency

The idea of agency of non-human things is not new. Far from it. Many religions and cultures, past and—to a lesser extent—present, understood or understand rivers, rocks, trees, animals and other 'things' as having power, vitality, spirit and potential influence upon human affairs. All religious traditions accord power over human affairs to one or more gods. Hippocrates and Aristotle, among others, attributed to specific climates the power to shape the behavior and capacities of entire populations. Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth-century North African social theorist, agreed; as did Montesquieu in the eighteenth century and many more since. None of these concepts carried weight with professional historians in recent centuries.

But the idea of non-human agency is undergoing a renaissance in the twenty-first century, driven by new understandings in the natural sciences that, in one form or another, reach social scientists. Jane Bennett, a political philosopher in the US, has been arguing for several years for the 'agency of things', and published her key statement on the subject in 2010. She writes of 'distributed agency', 'thing-power' and the 'vibrant materiality' of things, and calls for a politics that takes seriously the agency of things from fish oil supplements to electricity to garbage dumps. She says 'the locus of agency is always a human-nonhuman working group'.[2]

In a broadly similar vein, a political scientist from Britain (but working in the US), Timothy Mitchell, wrote of 'hybrid agency' in analyzing a 1942 malaria epidemic in Egypt. He credited Marx with recognizing the agency of things, because Marx wrote of 'capital' as if it had will, intent, and capacity. (I think

2 Bennett 2010: xvii.

Marx may just have meant 'capitalists in general'.) Mitchell found social science blind to the agency of non-human things, claiming social scientists always understood *things* only as objects acted upon by humans.[3]

Bruno Latour, together with other STS scholars and sociologists, drawing on 1960s French literary studies has, in his own often idiosyncratic way, arrived at parallel conclusions. Latour writes of 'actants'—his word for human and non-human agents alike, which drive social and technological change together, operating in networks. Agency resides in these networks.[4]

Within archaeology, a science always built around things, the notion that things might exercise agency in human affairs has met with less resistance than it has in many other fields. Ian Hodder among others has championed this position in his work on Çatalhöyük, the Neolithic site in Anatolia, and in his theoretical writings.[5]

Bennett, Mitchell, Latour, and Hodder are only four among several scholars in the social sciences who have sought to resurrect the idea that things, not just people, exercise agency in human affairs. Their work coincides with a minor movement within philosophy called 'object-oriented ontology', associated with scholars such as Graham Harman.[6] Historians, for their part, have been reluctant to award agency to things. Historians prefer their evidence to be in the form of texts written by humans, which inclines them to see only human actions behind human history. By and large, professional historians remain in thrall to the Renaissance humanist tradition that took history out of the hands of God and then claimed it exclusively for human society. The humanists did scholarship a favor with their first step, but not with their second.

3 Can Animals Have Historical Agency?

My position on these issues is shaped by thinking about mosquitoes off and on for thirty years. Beginning in my graduate student days, I concluded that the mosquito-borne diseases yellow fever and malaria played a large role in the political history of the Caribbean between 1600 and 1900. The more I learned about the specific mosquito species involved, the more it seemed to me that their particular habits accounted for their historical role.[7]

3 Mitchell 2002: 19–53.

4 Latour 1993: 1996.

5 Hodder 2012. A helpful recent review of archaeology's debates on this issue appears in Pitts and Versluys 2021.

6 Harman 2018. This book is less concerned with agency than with the autonomous existence of things beyond human perception of them.

7 McNeill 2010.

In a nutshell, the primary yellow fever vector, *Aedes aegypti*, and the several species of *Anopheles* mosquitoes that carry malaria in the Caribbean, flourished in the context of sugar plantations, introduced to the region in the early seventeenth century. Caribbean plantations improved and expanded niche space for these particular kinds of mosquitoes. Plantations offered better conditions for mosquito eggs and larvae in the form of abundant stagnant water, stored inadvertently in clay pots used for two months after the sugar harvest in the refining process, and in cisterns maintained to supply water for the initial stage of sugar-refining. After fields of sugarcane had taken the place of natural vegetation, plantations sustained fewer bird, fish, and frog predators for mosquitoes and their eggs and larvae. Plantations provided an expanded food supply for all mosquitoes in the form of sugarcane juice. And they contained more people and mammals to supply blood meals, which all female mosquitoes need to produce eggs. So at every stage of mosquito life-cycles, the plantation world suited them and they took advantage of the opportunities it presented.

In going about their brief lives, feeding and breeding without a thought to history, females of these mosquito species transmitted yellow fever virus and malarial plasmodia to almost everyone in the Caribbean capable of hosting these infections. For reasons connected to specific characteristics of the virus and plasmodia, and their interactions with human immune systems, these diseases played a partisan role in the inter-imperial warfare in the Caribbean, ca. 1650–1815, and in the revolutionary wars of the Greater Caribbean (including the southern United States), ca. 1780–1898. They did so by killing large numbers of military men born and raised in lands with no yellow fever and little malaria, such as Europe and northern North America, while killing few who came from lands of endemic yellow fever and malaria, such as Atlantic Africa between Senegal and Angola, and (after about 1650) the Caribbean itself. Mosquitoes and diseases helped keep Spanish America Spanish for 200 years and then, beginning in the 1780s, helped revolutionaries establish new countries in the US, Haiti, Venezuela, and Colombia.

I maintained that mosquitoes, viruses, plasmodia, and humans all shared in bringing about this political history. All involved were trying to survive and reproduce, while humans and only humans were also trying to do many other things. Only humans acted consciously. But they were no more conscious than were mosquitoes of the links between creating plantations and the 250-year reign of yellow fever. Viruses, mosquitoes, and humans were equally unconscious of the links between mosquitoes and human diseases (until the 1890s). In every case, it was actions undertaken for other reasons that led to partisan epidemics with political consequences. Hence, as I see it, mosquitoes, pathogens, and humans share the honor of making Caribbean political history in

these centuries and only our species' stubborn *amour propre* prevents us from admitting it.

I make this claim only for females of those species of mosquito that transmit human diseases, which amounts to a small proportion of the roughly 3,500 mosquito species in existence. I do not credit male *Aedes aegypti* or *Anopheles* with historical agency, except insofar as they are required to produce the next generation of female mosquitoes. Nor do I extend this argument to mosquitoes of species that do not communicate diseases, although I cannot rule out the possibility that at some future date other species will be discovered to have exercised agency somehow. Before the 1890s, *Aedes aegypti* and species of the genus *Anopheles* seemed no more significant than any other mosquitoes. By 1900 they had been identified as vectors of human disease.

Megafauna as well as mosquitoes deserve recognition as actors within political history. A good example is the partnership between horses and humans. Only two animals can regulate their temperatures by profuse, prolonged sweating—horses and humans. Some other animals, such as camels and bears, can sweat a little. Others have other methods of staying cool, such as the panting of dogs and wolves. Dogs and wolves can run for hours in very cold conditions, but they, like almost all other mammals, can exercise (meaning more than a walk) only for a few minutes at a time if it is warm.

Profuse sweating is an example of convergent biological evolution. It is something that both humans and horses developed independently over thousands of generations. The horse-human partnership, built on this quirk of convergent evolution, allows such things as cavalry and the political-military power of equestrian nomads. For nearly 4,000 years in Eurasia, horse nomads roaming the steppe grasslands exercised considerable military and political power despite their small numbers. Settled, agrarian peoples from Morocco to China recorded them as ravaging hordes and likened them to locusts or beasts, because their mobility on horseback allowed them to use violence in different ways than did settled folk. For nearly 200 years in North America's prairies, ca. 1690–1890, Amerindian horse nomads built sprawling, if loose, confederacies, even empires according to some scholars, despite very small populations.[8] They too acquired bad reputations among settled folk. The Comanche and Lakota could not have achieved military-political dominance without the endurance—the capacity for thermoregulation—of horses. And the horses could not have done it without learning to respond to human commands and to withstand danger when their instinct, presumably, urged them to run away from combat.

8 Hämäläinen 2009.

Do horses merit 'agency' in the political and military history of Eurasia and North America? They did not seek roles as cavalry mounts and had no idea they were helping to build the confederations and empires of the Parthians, Xiongnu, Pechenegs, Mongols or, in North America, the Comanche and Lakota. Unlike disease-bearing mosquitoes, horses were directed in their work by humans, who were conscious of political goals and eager to use horses to attain them. To my way of thinking, that means horses exercised a weaker agency than that of *Aedes aegypti*, even if their role is more obvious because, unlike mosquitoes and disease, the military value and political implications of horses have never been shrouded in mystery.

The argument made here about horses might apply, somewhat more weakly, to other animals of economic, cultural, or military importance, such as oxen, water buffalo, whales, falcons, or elephants. It applies to lowly earthworms, because of their role in aerating soil. But it does not apply to all animals. East Africa's naked mole rat has not, thus far, exercised agency in human history. (I insert the words 'thus far' because I might have said the same thing of horseshoe bats early in 2019, but not in the age of COVID-19.)

Extending agency in human history to fellow animals, such as certain mosquitoes and domesticated horses, is the easiest conceptual step. What about plants, fellow living creatures but biologically and evolutionarily much further removed from us? Might rice, potatoes, or tulips exercise agency? Certainly their specific qualities have mattered for human history, albeit in a small way in the case of tulips, credited with being the focus of a financial bubble in the Low Countries in 1637. As domesticated plants, they were, like horses, directed by humans, and would have had no historical importance if people had not chosen to plant them widely. But the fact that people made those choices had much to do with the plants' distinctive characteristics. Voters put certain politicians in positions from which those politicians exercise greater influence over history than they would have had they never been elected, and voters make their choices based on perceptions of the politicians' distinctive characteristics—just as farmers or landowners have done with rice or potatoes. Many domestic plants, I think, may be credited with limited agency in human history, even if, like *Aedes aegypti*, they were unconscious of their role and merely, under the guidance of natural selection, trying to survive and reproduce.[9]

9 It is not merely agronomic variables that account for crop choices. Inka leaders urged potato cultivation on Andean peasants because frozen mashed potato, *chuño*, made a good storable and portable food for Inka armies.

What about wild plants?[10] Even some wild plants might plausibly be included as agents of history. For six or eight millennia until the 1880s, the 950,000 square kilometers (ten times the area of the UK) of tallgrass prairie of North America supported teeming herds of bison. Those tens of millions of bison, in return, regulated prairie ecosystems, helping to prevent other vegetation from displacing tall grasses. When Amerindians in the heartland of North America acquired horses in the late seventeenth century, and then guns in the eighteenth, they quickly perfected a way of life as equestrian nomads that made them militarily and politically formidable, allowing them to dominate their neighbors for nearly 200 years. They hunted bison from horseback, improving their food supply, and assaulted their neighbors who had not mastered horses and guns. Big bluestem, little bluestem, switchgrass, and a few other species of wild grasses had a role in the Comanche and Lakota empires, just as indispensably, if less conspicuously, as horses and bison.

Certain tree species also played roles in shaping human history. The most visible examples, perhaps, are those that yielded good naval timber in the age of sail. White pines made the best mast timber, and so naval powers (ca. 1700–1850) sought to control regions where white pines grew. Cuban cedar and South Asian teak proved especially resistant to ship rot, accounting for the siting of Spanish naval shipyards in Havana and encouraging British ones in Bombay. This record, as I see it, gives certain trees a form of weak agency in human history. Once again, however, this argument ought not be extended to all wild plants. Thousands exist that have held no importance at all for human affairs—thus far.

4 Can Metals, Rocks, and Abstractions Have Agency Too?

Most wire is made from alloys that are more than 99% copper. Their molecules are dominated by properties of copper atoms, including a spare electron that is easily detached from a nucleus, which makes copper a good conductor of electricity. Copper's atomic structure also makes it easy to bend, easy to harden, and not much prone to overheating when conducting electricity. All these properties are either rare or unique to copper, and account for its history as electric wire, on which so much of the modern electrified world depends. Copper's properties also account for its role as a component of bronze, so important in the various Bronze Ages of large parts of ancient Eurasia and Egypt (and rather

10 I admit the distinction between domesticated and wild is fuzzy with respect to some plants, and for that matter some animals, and use it here only for heuristic purposes.

less important in West African history). In both the modern and ancient world, copper and humans have had a special relationship.

According to Tim Lecain, this means copper shares agency in human history.[11] Japan's abundant copper deposits encouraged it to build modern industry and warships (which included vast amounts of copper), helping to account for Japan's peculiar trajectory since 1870. I am not sure I can go as far as Lecain: for me it is easier to draw the line at mosquitoes and megafauna, at certain plants and animals, to accord them agency, but stop short of the molecular properties of wire or the atomic structure of copper. Yes, Japan's post-Meiji modernization used a great deal of copper. So did Canada, Germany, Russia, and Switzerland, whether or not they had copper mines. Whether or not they chose to build modern navies, surely, depended much more on other variables than on the availability of copper or, *a fortiori*, copper's specific properties.

My reluctance applies equally to other dead things, such as the translucent marble of the ancient Mediterranean world so crucial to the development of Greek and Roman statuary. Sculptors could not have developed their skills with mallet and chisel to the same extent working with sandstone. So did Pentelic marble exercise agency in the cultural history of the Ancient Greek world? If earthworms and switchgrass may be credited with limited agency, why not copper and marble?

Finally, can we imagine investing historical agency in something non-human but made by humans? The systems of abstract symbols known as alphabets vary greatly around the world. Some, such as those used in Finland or Korea, match up very well with the sounds of spoken language. Apparently, spelling and reading in Finnish and Korean is easier than in most other languages. In English, on the other hand, spelling and reading are much harder, because the alphabet and orthography match up poorly with spoken English: there are silent letters, and letters and combinations of letters that are pronounced in a wide variety of ways. These systems—their internal consistency or inconsistency—have consequences. In English-speaking societies, the proportion of children who struggle to read is considerably higher than in Finland or either North or South Korea. The English alphabet and orthography leads to slower reading acquisition among many children, a greater range of reading abilities among small children, more kids concluding they are stupid or that school is stupid, and so a larger proportion of people left behind as adults. Korean and Finnish do not create nearly so many of these casualties of early childhood reading trouble. In an earlier age, with agrarian economies, illiteracy, impaired literacy, and alienation from school was only a small handicap

11 Lecain 2017.

in life. But lately, due to the evolution of modern economies, it has become a major one. So the costs to individuals and societies, once negligible, have magnified.[12] Does this mean alphabets, orthography, and 'orthographic transparency' have historical agency?

'Agents' cause things to happen, or contribute to historical causation, and they need not be human. They need not have intent or will. Do they need to be alive, or can dead things like copper, marble, and alphabets, also be accorded agency? We all have to decide for ourselves. I draw the line at living things, and only certain living things. The best argument I can offer for drawing the line at living things is that to have agency requires someone or something to be able to act. Mosquitoes, horses, and even big bluestem grasses act. They fly, bite, and in some cases inject pathogens into humans; or they run, sweat, and in some cases work as warhorses; or they turn sunlight, water, and soil nutrients into food for bison and horses. Copper, marble, and alphabets have characteristics that carry consequences, but they do not act. This will not satisfy those who consider that copper 'acts' in certain ways when in the presence of an electrical charge; they extend agency more generously. It will not satisfy those who, for political or other reasons, see agency as a monopoly of human animals. It leaves unresolved the matter of those things that may or may not be alive, such as viruses. (Personally, I am content to award historical agency to those viruses that cause major human diseases, indeed those such as rinderpest that used to cause cattle plagues.)

One last point: not all agency is equal in its power. No one doubts this is true among humans: every peasant acts as much as every king, but the actions of the average king carry more consequences than the actions of the average peasant. Both peasant and king exercise agency, but the agency of the king matters more. As there are gradations of power, there are gradations in the degree to which humans exercise agency and influence over history. And so it is with distributed agency, in two senses. First, the combination of Comanche,

12 Of course many factors contribute to the levels of literacy in any given society, but efforts to sort out the variables by studying children in the same communities learning to read different languages conclude that the specific language is the key variable: e.g. between Welsh and English speakers, 'These schools serve the same geographical catchment area, are administered by the same local education authorities, and follow similar curricula and teaching approaches. The only real difference is the language of instruction. Yet, the results showed that the Welsh-speaking children could read well over twice as many words as the English-speaking children after the same amount of reading instruction'. Ziegler and Goswami 2006: 430. On what specialists call 'orthographic depth' or 'orthographic transparency' and literacy, see Miller 2019; Ziegler and Goswami 2005; Kim 2011; Borleffs et al. 2018. English orthography is among the most opaque; Korean, Finnish, Turkish, Spanish, and Dutch are among the most transparent.

horses, and grass influenced human history less than the combination of Mongols, horses, and grass, because the spaces and populations in the former case were smaller than in the latter. Second, within the latter, the Mongols exercised more agency than the horses or the grass, even though both were indispensable to Mongol power. They directed the horses; horses did not direct the Mongols.

5 Conclusion

None of this denies human agency or that of social groups. It adds to it, and suggests that agency is often 'distributed' among people and things operating in what some scholars call networks but which I might call constellations—because, to me, 'network' implies cooperation and coordination, which mosquitoes and humans did not do. But it is not the precise terms that matter, at least not to me, but the concept, the broadening of historical understanding about why events occurred as they did.

Accepting the historical agency of things has an uneven impact across the varieties of history. It probably has no consequences at all for the question of what early Christian thought owed to Plato. It has rather more in the matter of the success of the American or Haitian Revolution. I would guess that non-human participants are least often important in intellectual history and most often in the history of health—although Bennett and Lecain make various claims about how human thinking is affected by micro-organisms and contaminants, and so even ideas are to some extent shaped by non-human agents.

Just as several scholars, including me, now maintain that non-human agents help drive social change and human history, some scholars—also including me—maintain that what used to be considered nature and natural history should in many cases be recognized as having human agency behind it. The historians of disasters—floods, droughts, earthquakes, and so forth—often say that there is no such thing as a natural disaster. Floods, droughts, and earthquakes are disasters in part because of the structures and arrangements of human communities, and so disasters must be understood as partly human, partly natural in often complex entanglements.

On a larger scale, climate is no longer purely a matter of non-human forces at work. At some point—and scholars disagree considerably about just when—humans began to influence global climate and its evolution. Climate shifts and shocks, perhaps as early as the Neolithic, perhaps only as recently as the nineteenth century, were partly the result of cultural changes that altered the chemical composition of the atmosphere.

So the distinction between culture and nature necessarily becomes blurred. While some things that affect human affairs may remain purely natural, such as the varying output of the sun, and some human affairs may remain purely cultural, such as debates about the proper meaning of a Bible verse, the middle ground is growing. In that middle ground it is harder to say precisely how agency works, harder to say just what is natural and what is not, harder to say just why history took the course it did. But our explanations in many cases have been too easy for too long.

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CHAPTER 2

Builders, Architects, and the Power of Context: Agents of Architectural Change in Fourth-Century-BCE Epidaurus and Delphi

Jean Vanden Broeck-Parant

1 Introduction

In the fourth century BCE, Greece saw a number of architectural innovations, in terms of both design and techniques. On the mainland, the Doric order was marked by a series of developments, which were all, to various extents, anchored in tradition. The impulse of this renewal likely sprang from the Peloponnese, with some distinctly local evolutions and some inspired by the Ionic order or infused with Athenian influences. The novelties quickly reached Delphi, where Peloponnesian contractors, architects and building commissioners were active at the time. Much scholarly work has been dedicated to the evolutions of design, such as new architectural elements and changes in proportions.[1] While a whole web of similarities can be, and have been, drawn between most of the fourth-century monumental buildings of these regions, a firm, comprehensive chronology remains difficult to establish. Purely technical features of fourth-century construction have been noticed and discussed, but not to the same extent as the aspects of design.

Consequently, the technical innovations in fourth-century BCE Greek architecture have not been studied much with regard to the processes of their diffusion. Particularly little explored is the identification of the driving agents of architectural changes of that time. Later periods, for which the evidence is more abundant, have been better served by recent studies. The Hellenistic and Roman periods, with their mass production of materials, sometimes at an almost industrial level, and their high rate of preservation, have encouraged and facilitated the study of the diffusion of techniques.[2] Fourth-century BCE monumental construction does not lend itself as easily to this kind of analysis. While sustained building activity took place at that time, with what seems to

1 Roux 1961; Winter 1982.

2 See notably Hohlfelder and Oleson 2014: 227–230; Lancaster 2015: 192–204; Gerding and Östborn 2017.

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have been a booming labor market, talking about a 'nearly industrial' production would be a stretch. As a result, the nature of the evidence is different. Yet, despite the difficulty of tracking the diffusion of techniques in time and space with accuracy, some agents of change, both human and non-human, can be identified and discussed.

2 Human Agents of Change: Architects and Contractors

A series of individuals, whether they belonged to socially distinct groups or not, were involved in the construction of monumental buildings. They can be divided into several categories, according to their function within the project. There were the commissioners, the financial and technical supervisors, the architects, the contractors, the guarantors, and the workers. It is undeniable that the architect's choices must have had an important impact, notably on the design of the building. Technical details, however, might be more attributable to entrepreneurs and craftsmen.[3] As Jim J. Coulton put it, 'there are (…) two main vehicles for the transmission of architectural ideas: the masons and the architects'.[4]

Inscriptions and literary sources give the names of several architects active in the first half of the fourth century BCE, although some of these pose rather serious problems regarding their identification. The architect of the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus (fig. 2.1), Theodotus, is mentioned in building accounts preserved on stone,[5] but he is not otherwise known. Some have suggested that he should be equated with the Theodorus who, according to Vitruvius, wrote

3 In the inscriptions the people working on the construction site are usually referred to as *ergonai*, a rather vague term. The distinction that I make here between craftsmen and entrepreneurs is inspired by Burford's use of these terms to denote the difference between artisans working with a small team of assistants (e.g. sculptors), on the one hand, and individuals dealing with large construction works who were sometimes responsible for several major steps of the project (e.g. quarrying, transport, setting) and were in charge of a large number of workers (Burford 1969: 148). The term 'entrepreneur' should be understood here in this narrow sense. The term 'contractor' refers to anyone who has entered a contract with the building commissioners (or with another authority in charge of the works). See further discussion below.

4 Coulton 1983: 453.

5 Prignitz 2014 n°1 (= *IG* IV² 102), l. 7, 29–30, 52, 102–103, 108–109, 110. The new edition of the inscription by Prignitz is now considered the edition of reference. Note that the line numbers do not coincide with those of the *IG*.

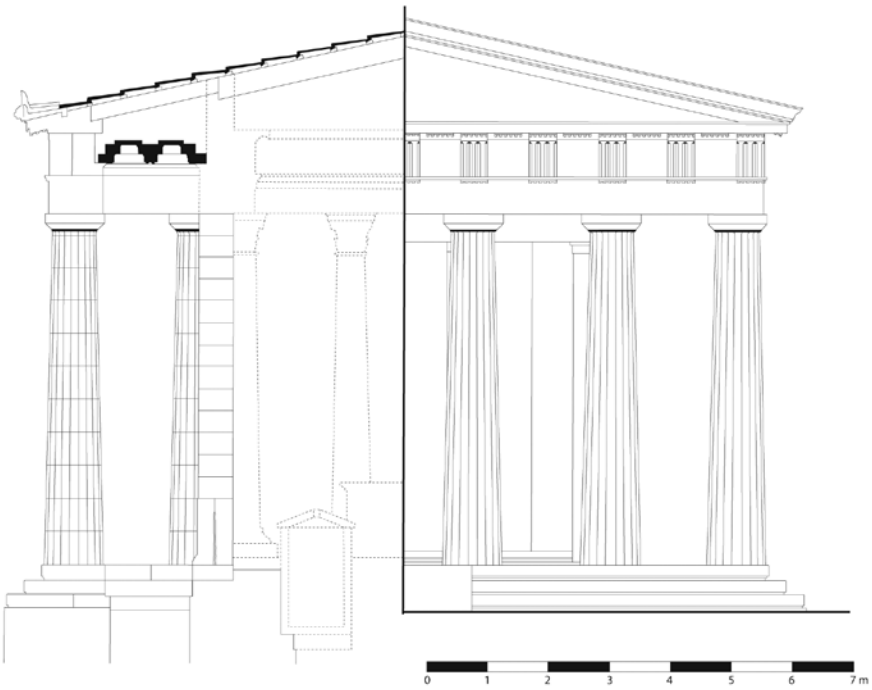

FIGURE 2.1 Section (left) and façade (right) of the temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus
DRAWING BY JEAN VANDEN BROECK-PARANT AFTER ROUX 1961: 125 FIG. 28

a treatise on the Tholos of Delphi[6]—and therefore probably also designed it.[7] This hypothesis implies that Vitruvius would have made (or repeated) an error regarding the name of Theodotus. This Theodorus/Theodotus identification, which rests on the proximity of the architectural ornamentation and sculptural decoration of the temple of Asclepius and the Tholos, is impossible to prove at this stage. Another theory regarding Theodorus is that he was not, as Vitruvius wrote, from Phocaea (*Phocaeus*), that is, from Asia Minor, but from Phocis (*Phoceus*), the region surrounding Delphi, thus making him a local, an 'enfant du pays', and a potential pupil of Ictinus.[8] While a decisive argument has yet to be put forward to determine the origin of the architect of the Tholos, the question has important ramifications regarding the architects'

6 Vitr. 7 *praef.* 12.

7 See Vierneisel-Schlörb 1976: 80 (with earlier bibliography).

8 Bousquet has argued for this theory several times; for the most detailed argumentation, see Bousquet 1960: 287 n. 2. See also Coulton 1983: 454 n. 6. *Contra* Vierneisel-Schlörb 1976: 81.

role and agency in the implementation of innovations (see below). The architect of another round building, the Thymele of Epidaurus, is recorded by Pausanias (writing ca. 150–175 CE) as being a certain Polyclitus, who was also responsible, according to the traveler, for the theater of Epidaurus.[9] It is almost certain that Pausanias was thinking of the sculptor Polyclitus the Elder, for he mentions qualities usually attributed to his work, such as 'harmony of proportions' and 'beauty' (*harmonia* and *kallos*). However, it cannot have been the famous Polyclitus, since he died around 420 BCE, a few decades before the Thymele was built. It is possible that Pausanias confused Polyclitus the Elder with a Polyclitus of the fourth century BCE, although no artist of this name is otherwise known for architectural works. There is, therefore, no certainty with regard to the identity of the architect of the Thymele.[10]

In Delphi, Pausanias gives the name of the architect of the temple of Apollo, Spintharus of Corinth.[11] The epigraphic accounts of the construction of the temple, however, mention a Xenodorus and an Agathon;[12] the latter probably took over from the former around 342–341 BCE.[13] These pieces of information do not necessarily contradict one another: while Agathon and Xenodorus were evidently 'effective' architects in charge of supervising the works, Spintharus could have been the chief designer of the temple.[14]

In sum, the identification of the architects in charge of major buildings at Delphi and Epidaurus in the fourth century BCE is, in most cases, uncertain at best, and their origins remain relatively obscure. Theodotus, who worked on the temple of Asclepius, might have been an Epidaurian, based on the absence of any ethnic following his name in the building accounts; the weakness of such an argument, however, does not need to be demonstrated. Theodorus, if he is not to be identified with Theodotus, may have been either from Phocaea or from Phocis, two widely distant regions. Agathon and Xenodorus were probably Delphians, but it is not certain that they were actively involved in the design of the temple of Apollo. The Corinthian origin of Spintharus, the architect of the temple according to Pausanias, is consistent with the Peloponnesian

9 Paus. 2.27.5.

10 See Roux 1961: 184–187; Prignitz 2014: 247.

11 Paus. 10.5.13.

12 Xenodorus: *CID* II 31, l. 40, 61, 66, 88, 99; 34, col. I, l. 51, 76; col. II, l. 37, 67. Agathon: *CID* II 46 A, l. 14–17; 50 col. II, l. 8–11; 55, l. 20–22; 62 col. II A, l. 22–25. Agathon is also referred to as the 'architect of the temple' (ὁ ἀρχιτέκτων τοῦ ναοῦ) in a later decree in honor of his grandson Damon: *CID* IV 44, l. 33.

13 Jacquemin 1990: 81.

14 On the architects of the fourth-century temple of Apollo at Delphi, see Amandry and Hansen 2010: 464–465.

aspects of the temple. One could argue that the attribution (although probably incorrect) of the Thymele to Polyclitus by the same author reflects the local nature of the building.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to go beyond these snippets of information, let alone reconstruct the careers of the architects. Furthermore, their origins, however important they might have been to their education, were not necessarily the most decisive factor in the diffusion of architectural innovations. According to Coulton, 'most architects seem to have stayed within one cultural area', as evidenced by 'the existence of recognizable local variants within more widespread patterns of similarity'.[15] It is beyond doubt, however, that at least some architects, perhaps those with an established reputation, did travel in antiquity.[16] The more important question for us is rather whether traveling architects automatically integrated architectural features from their home region (or the region where they were trained) at all. The question is a difficult one and is inextricably linked with issues regarding, on the one hand, the attribution of buildings to specific architects and, on the other hand, the nature and the extent of the architect's role in a building project. The case of the temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae (ca. 420 BCE) is illustrative of this problem. Its authorship was attributed by Pausanias to Ictinus, also known to have worked on the Parthenon and the Telesterion of Eleusis.[17] From the point of view of both style and design, very little in the temple of Bassae can be compared to the Attic works of Ictinus, and some have questioned Pausanias' attribution on that basis.[18] Most scholars, however, have accepted Pausanias' account and have proposed various explanations for the architectural discrepancies between Ictinus' attributed works.[19] Frederick Cooper, in his monograph on the temple of Apollo at Bassae, made a case for its attribution to Ictinus, while at the same time 'realizing fully that it can never become a settled matter'.[20] Cooper points out the stylistic disparities between the three buildings but questions stylistic analysis as a valid method to identify the architect (in the sense of designer) of a building. Rather, his demonstration rests mainly on the idea that all three buildings designed by Ictinus—the temple of Bassae, the Parthenon, and the Telesterion—would have had interior Ionic columns.

15 Coulton 1983: 454.

16 Linder 2020: 230–231, 233–234, 238. See the useful list of architects with their origin when known in Miles 2017: 107–108, table 7.1.

17 Paus. 8.41.9; Plu. *Per.* 13.6–7; Str. 9.1.12–16; Vitr. 7 *praef.* 11, 12.6; 16.

18 Roux 1961: 21–22, 56–57; Eckstein 1960; Winter 1980.

19 See Winter 1980 and Svenson-Evers 1996: 160–166, 182–187 for useful summaries of the various explanations, with earlier bibliography.

20 Cooper 1996: 369–379.

It should be stressed that this is neither certain for the Telesterion nor for the Parthenon.[21] A further argument by Cooper is that all three buildings were all architecturally unique, and that this very uniqueness makes it all the more likely that they were all designed by the same man.[22]

In any case, if one accepts Cooper's demonstration, it follows that, in Ictinus' case at least, the architect's influence on the architectural features of the buildings would have been limited to one key element of design, i.e. the interior Ionic columns. One wonders, however, whether this must necessarily be connected to a specific architect, rather than to a general architectural trend of that period.[23]

In the face of these uncertainties, the question of the reliability of Pausanias on such matters should not be avoided, especially as it has been raised for a number of his attributions to architects and, in general, to artists.[24] In the case of the temple of Bassae, serious doubts can be cast on Pausanias' explanation of the *epiklêsis* Epicurius, according to which Apollo would have helped the Phigalians struck by the plague at the time of the Peloponnesian War. Indeed, according to Thucydides (2.54) the virulence of the plague in the Peloponnese was nothing compared to what it was in Attica. Furthermore, the finds on the site of the temple of Apollo point to a cult with a martial connotation rather than a medical one.[25] The discrepancy between Thucydides' account and Pausanias' explanation casts doubt, in turn, on his attribution of the temple to Ictinus.

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21 In the case of the Telesterion, the hypothesis rests in large part, on the one hand, on the assumption that the larger beddings of the Ictinian phase could accommodate Ionic bases and, on the other hand, on an inventory inscription (*IG* I^3 386–387) that mentions *speirai* (l. 105)—commonly accepted as referring to moulded bases (Ionic or Corinthian; see Hellmann 1992: 377–378)—which had been 'taken down' from a *neos* (l. 103). This *neos* most likely refers to the Telesterion, but it has also been argued that the Ionic bases belonged to an earlier phase of the building; see Cavanaugh 1996: 169–172. More recently, Ioulia Kaoura (2019: 197 n. 31) considered the attribution of the Ionic bases to the Ictinian phase of the building impossible because this construction phase was abandoned at an early stage, which can hardly be conciliated with the 1750 pairs of roof tiles recorded in the inscription (l. 104). In the case of the rear chamber of the Parthenon, the existence of interior columns is almost certain, but Corinthian columns have also been suggested by Pedersen 1989.

22 Cooper 1996: 370.

23 As pointed out by Moretti 1997: 325–326, the Propylaea of Mnesicles and the hypostyle building in Argos also present an arrangement with interior Ionic columns and exterior Doric columns.

24 Habicht 1985: 147–150.

25 Eckstein 1960: 60–61.

A similar question has been raised about Pausanias' attribution of the Classical temple of Athena Alea in Tegea to Scopas of Paros,[26] who is known to have worked in Ionia, most notably on the sculptures of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus and the temple of Artemis in Ephesus.[27] Pausanias is the only source qualifying Scopas as an architect, and it is certain that he did not confuse Scopas with someone else, as he also explicitly states his profession as a sculptor. There are a few arguments that support the idea that Scopas may have worked at Tegea, at least as a sculptor.[28] Assuming, therefore, that Scopas was indeed the architect of the temple, we are again left with the following question: what were his personal contributions to the temple of Tegea that could be linked specifically with the Cyclades (his home region) or Ionia (the region where he was trained as a sculptor)? In most regards, the building fits very well within the mainland Doric traditions and developments of the fourth century BCE, and it is especially close to the Thymele of Epidaurus.[29] According to Erik Østby, a potential Ionic influence could be detected in the interior Corinthian half-columns (even if the Thymele of Epidaurus also presents interior Corinthian columns) and the ornaments of the ceilings of the ptera, the antae and the tops and bases of the walls.[30] Naomi J. Norman had earlier suggested that the epikranitis could have been inspired by the Erechtheion[31] but one explanation does not necessarily exclude the other and Scopas (if it was him) may have taken his inspirations from various sources. In any case, the richness of the interior ornament of the Tegea temple has been recognized as quite bold and innovative. Furthermore, Østby sees a further connection with Scopas' home region in the lintel of the north porch, which appears to have been richly decorated with Ionic ornaments, in the manner of Cycladic marble architecture.[32] While Østby himself says that these links to

26 Paus. 8.45.5.

27 See Stewart 1977: 126–135 for the numerous literary sources on Scopas.

28 Scopas' sculptures present similarities with the ones from the Temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus (Calcani 2009: 14–15, with earlier bibliography). The sculptor Timotheus, who is recorded in the building accounts of the temple, worked with Scopas in Halicarnassus (Plin. *Nat.* 36.30–31; Vitr. 7 *praef.* 13), and it has been suggested that Scopas was his assistant on the Temple of Asclepius (Stewart 1977: 90). An early career of Scopas around 395–390 (Calcani 2009: 3) would be compatible with the reassessment of the date of the temple of Asclepius by Prignitz 2014 in the first decade of the fourth century BCE.

29 Østby 2014.

30 Østby 2014: 347.

31 Norman 1984: 181.

32 Pakkanen 2014: 361–362.

Scopas are 'admittedly rather vague' and 'independent',[33] it is tempting to see the rich interior ornament as the mark of an artist with an Ionic background.

Nonetheless, the question remains as to whether these bold innovations can be safely attributed to the architect and only him. According to Østby, another connection with the Cyclades is the use of marble for the construction of Tegea. It was local marble from Dholiana but admittedly at that time a temple made of marble was quite a novelty in the Peloponnese; in the Cyclades, on the contrary, there was an established tradition of building in marble.[34] Arguably, marble did not only call for an experienced architect, but also for skilled craftsmen familiar with this material. Furthermore, these craftsmen would also need to be familiar with the stylistic elements that were implemented in the temple of Tegea. In this regard, an interesting relief found in Tegea provides a possible indication of the presence, on the construction site of the temple, of craftsmen from Caria. The relief depicts Ada and Idrieus, Mausolus' successors as joint satraps between 351 and 344 BCE, and Zeus Stratios or Labrandeus, who was worshipped at Labraunda in Caria. While it was previously believed to be a dedication by a Carian craftsman who would have followed Scopas and his team from Halicarnassus to Tegea,[35] Geoffrey B. Waywell has argued that the relief was more probably part of an official Tegean decree recording a benefaction from Ada and Idrieus. According to Waywell, the satraps may have wanted to patronize a major architectural project on the mainland.[36] This interpretation does not exclude the presence of Carian craftsmen at Tegea, quite the contrary: if the example of later Hellenistic rulers is any good indication,[37] Ada and Idrieus may have sent, along with money, skilled and experienced workmen as part of their benefaction. While the involvement of Scopas and his team cannot be proven in this case, it should be stressed that in such cases where ornamental innovations were implemented using an unfamiliar material, the final execution rested mainly on the craftsmen's skills and experience, which could have been acquired in another region.[38] In such a context, a good understanding and an efficient cooperation between the architect and the

33 Østby 2014: 348.

34 Østby 2014: 347.

35 Dinsmoor 1950: 220.

36 Waywell 1993.

37 Particularly the Attalids; see Bringmann and von Steuben 1995, n°28 (craftsmen for the stoa of Eumenes II in Athens), n°29 (craftsmen (?) for the stoa of Attalus II in Athens), n°93 (builders for the theater and other votive gifts in Delphi), n°95 (painters in Delphi).

38 Pfaff 2003: 194–196 suggested that the 'Attic' stylistic features of the temple of Hera at the Argive Heraion were due to the possible participation in the construction of Attic craftsmen with an experience in such decorative elements. This is all the more likely that the sima blocks and the metopes, which are among the most 'atticizing' elements, were

craftsmen were vital. The discussions about the temples of Bassae and Tegea show that we know very little about the extent of the architects' agency when it came to introducing innovative, personal architectural features to buildings. They also suggest that the implementation of architectural features were necessarily collective and shared between the architect and the craftsmen; this will be discussed further below.

So, even if some architects did travel, it is questionable whether this was the most important factor in the diffusion of architectural innovations. The architects' new ideas, however, may have been transmitted more efficiently by written accounts than by traveling, as was argued by Coulton.[39] Vitruvius says that Theodorus wrote a treatise on the Tholos of Delphi, and Coulton suggested that such written works were key agents in transmitting 'new rules of proportion' and, in the case of Theodorus, 'fourth-century Peloponnesian styles'.[40] Technical descriptions, *sungraphai*, were used by the architects to convey their intentions to the commissioners and, more importantly, to the craftsmen. A good example of such written instructions is the one made for the Arsenal of Philo, preserved on stone; they were found to correspond very accurately to the architectural remains of the building, which were first discovered in Piraeus in 1988.[41] Part of these *sungraphai* at least were later turned into books, some of which are mentioned by Vitruvius. They likely were part of the diffusion of innovative designs, alongside with the complete treatises from which they originated, even though they probably circulated only within narrow circles of specialists.[42] Details were communicated by the architects to the craftsmen and the commissioners by means of *paradeigmata* 'specimens' and *anagrapheis* 'templates', but the available evidence suggests that they were normally made at full scale,[43] making them impractical for the transmission of new styles across regions. Smaller models from later periods are known to have traveled great distances, but the examples remain scarce.[44] In any case, the conventional aspect of Greek architecture usually made drawings unnecessary; rules of proportions were sufficient, and they could easily be written

probably all made of Pentelic marble, i.e. from Athens. The architect of the temple was, according to Pausanias, a man from Argos named Eupolemos (2.17.3).

39 Coulton 1983: 454.

40 Vitr. 7 *praef.* 12; Coulton 1983: 462–463.

41 *IG* II^2 1668; von Eickstedt 1991: 148.

42 Wesenberg 1984.

43 Such is the case of the drawings found in the temple of Apollo at Didyma; see Haselberger 1980. More recently, on ancient blueprints, see Capelle 2019.

44 Haselberger 1997.

down.[45] More unusual constructions, like the Tholos of Delphi (or the Thymele of Epidaurus), perhaps required more explanation. Written documents, in any way, must have been the main agents of transmission for new elements of design. Oral explanation, although rarely accounted for, must also have played an important role, if not for details, at least for conveying the spirit of new constructions.[46] Ultimately, the edifices themselves, of course, were agents of transmission, albeit immobile ones, inasmuch as they were the tangible results of the projects. However, technical details were not necessarily visible once the building was completed. Therefore, their diffusion must have depended primarily on the craftsmen and entrepreneurs themselves.

The entrepreneurs and craftsmen appear, most often by name, in the building accounts of Delphi and Epidaurus as contractors in charge of various jobs such as stone quarrying, stone transport, assemblage, sculpture, roofing, material supply, etc.[47] The fact that only their names are mentioned in the building inscriptions (sometimes along with the names of their guarantors) is the reflection of an administrative reality rather than a faithful image of a working site: the important contractors employed a number of workmen whom they hired on a more or less temporary basis. As Alison Burford put it, 'the entrepreneur organized the performance of a service by coordinating the resources of others'.[48] This is a compelling view, even though that does not mean that they were not skilled professionals and did not look for profit themselves.[49] The entrepreneurs, therefore, must have had authority over numerous workmen, with the ability to give orders and, consequently, to implement significant changes, at least at the technical level.

At least some of the entrepreneurs and craftsmen took up contracts in various sanctuaries and cities, making the materials, the workmen, and the techniques travel at a regional level.[50] For the construction of the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus, the foreign contractors came mostly from the large neighboring city-states of Argos, Corinth and Athens, but also from Tegea, Troezen, Stymphalus and more distant places like Crete and Paros. These foreign contractors must have come with their own experience, skills and

45 Coulton 1983: 462.

46 Plutarch recounts the story of two architects who had to defend their projects orally in public in Athens (*Moralia* 802 B).

47 For a view of the construction labor market in the classical and Hellenistic periods from the point of view of the craftsmen, see Feyel 2006.

48 Burford 1969: 149.

49 Vanden Broeck-Parant 2022.

50 On traveling craftsmen in the context of construction, see Hellmann 2000; Feyel 2006. On traveling *technitai* in general, see Massar 2020: 84–87.

techniques. The building accounts of Delphi show an even wider range of origins of contractors, but with a similar predominance of Argos, Corinth, and Athens. In fact, a series of contractors appear both at Epidaurus and at Delphi, like Molossus of Athens,[51] Chremon of Argos,[52] Nicostratus of Argos,[53] and perhaps Onasimus.[54]

Several individuals, known as architects or entrepreneurs, also took other roles in monumental construction. It is only a small step from architect to entrepreneur, and vice versa. Callicrates, who was active in Athens in the fifth century BCE, is known by an inscribed decree as the architect of the temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis.[55] According to Plutarch, he also worked on the Parthenon with Ictinus, as well as on the construction of the Middle Wall to Piraeus.[56] With regard to the latter work, Plutarch used the verb ἐργολαβέω, which usually translates to 'contract for the execution of work'.[57] The use of this specific term has led some scholars[58] to believe that Callicrates was the contractor of the works, that is the entrepreneur, and not the architect. Even if other experts disagree with this interpretation,[59] it can be safely said that Callicrates was at least both a 'designer-architect' and someone with practical skills in charge of more utilitarian projects.[60]

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51 *CID* II 32, l. 10–11; Prignitz 2014, n°2 (= *IG* IV^2 103), l. 207–208, 216–217.

52 *CID* II 62, col. II A, l. 2–3, 12, 24; 79A, col. I, l. 35; Prignitz 2014, n°2, l. 144, 176, 186, 187, 220, 248.

53 *CID* II 46 B, col. II, l. 4–10; 48, l. 5–7; 59, col. I, l. 25–29; 79 A, col. I, l. 32–38; Prignitz 2014, n°2, l. 144, 176, 185. Nicostratus was a common name; other individuals of that name appear in the Epidaurian accounts (see Prignitz 2014: 303–304, s.v. Νικόστρατος).

54 The case of Onasimus is more uncertain: mentioned for a small work of gluing at the stylobate of the Thymele of Epidaurus (Prignitz 2014 n°2, l. 299), he is a *lithagôgos*, a 'stone transporter', in the Delphian accounts (*CID* II 31, l. 47, 54).

55 *IG* I^3 35, l. 12–13.

56 Plu. *Per.* 13.4–5. Even though Pausanias and Vitruvius do not mention Callicrates when evoking the Parthenon, it is probable that he was at least the co-architect of the building.

57 *LSJ* s.v. ἐργολαβέω.

58 Jacquemin 1990: 83 considered that he was both an architect-designer and an entrepreneur, while Holtzmann 2002: 148 tried to reconcile the two aspects, calling him an 'architecte-entrepreneur', a sort of master builder in charge of minor works, including on the Parthenon.

59 Burford 1969: 111 n. 2; Coulton 1977: 164 n. 69; Wesenberg 1982: 110. The two arguments against Callicrates being the entrepreneur of the Middle Walls are, first, that ἐργολαβέω does not necessarily mean 'contract for the execution of works' in Plutarch, who might have only used it for *oratio variata*; and second, that Plutarch may have referred to a later practice than mid fifth-century Athens, and therefore used a later term.

60 Callicrates is also known by an inscription (*IG* I^3 45) to have been in charge of repairing security features on the Acropolis (perhaps its walls) to prevent runaway slaves and thieves to enter it. In his role of 'designer-architect', he has been credited (in addition to

In the fourth century BCE too, several examples are known of architects who appeared in other roles. Still in Delphi, the aforementioned Agathon appears several times in the building accounts as the architect of the temple of Apollo, from about 342–341 to 335 BCE.[61] In 333–332 BCE, the accounts mention an entrepreneur called Agathon who was in charge of rebuilding the middle part of the eastern *peribolos* wall of the sanctuary.[62] Whether the two are in fact the same individual cannot be ascertained but is plausible.[63] In third-century Delos, a few names appear in the accounts both as entrepreneurs and as architects. The rarity of some of these names allows us to think that they refer to single individuals rather than homonymous ones, even though in some cases time differences between two mentions call for caution.[64] Dinocrates, for instance, appears as an entrepreneur between 284 and 274 BCE,[65] and is mentioned again as an architect almost 30 years later, in 246 BCE.[66] The time gap is much smaller, however, in the case of Phaneas, mentioned as an entrepreneur from 279 to 275 BCE,[67] and then as an architect paid by the city in 274 and 269 BCE.[68] When names are more common, one should be more cautious, as with Antigonus, an architect in 250 BCE; could he be identified with one of the seven artisans of that name recorded in the inscriptions?[69] Finally, the entrepreneur Harpalis might have been the son of the architect Simos.[70]

Returning to fourth-century Delphi, the case of Epiteles, son of Soinomus, of Athens is worth looking into. He appears first in an account of 327–326 BCE, as a *naopoios*.[71] The *naopoioi* were a board of individuals from various regions of the Greek world, in charge of supervising the reconstruction of the temple of Apollo. Their mission was technical and financial: they were the ones who made the payments to the contractors (after verification of the works by the

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the temple of Athena Nike) with the Ilissos Temple, the Temple of the Athenians in Delos, and the Erechtheion; see Shear 1963.

61 See above, n. 12.

62 *CID* II 81 A, l. 15–18.

63 Jacquemin 1990: 81–83. Hansen (Amandry and Hansen 2010: 464 n. 8) considered the identification likely, because Agathon appears as a 'practical' architect, in charge of running the construction works, and because it would not have been easy for him to find another job as an architect on another large temple, even in the fourth century BCE. An Agathon is also mentioned in 356 BCE for a small job of stone transport: *CID* II 31, l. 27; he is probably a homonymous person.

64 Jacquemin 1990: 83.

65 For his numerous appearances, see Feyel 2006: 210–211.

66 *ID* 290, l. 107.

67 Feyel 2006: 282.

68 *IG* XI 2, 199 C, l. 41–42; 203 A, l. 60.

69 See Feyel 2006: 195–196.

70 Lacroix and Glotz 1914: 142.

71 *CID* II 97, l. 22.

architect).[72] Epiteles is mentioned again, in the very same inscription, as a contractor in charge of a water work at the gymnasium.[73] A few years later, in 322–321 BCE, he appears again as an entrepreneur for a similar contract.[74] Epiteles is known from other inscriptions; his career shows that a high social status was not incompatible with being an entrepreneur.[75] Another *naopoios* at Delphi, Astias of Epidaurus, could be the same individual as the contractor mentioned in the Epidaurian accounts.[76]

In Epidaurus too, the accounts of the fourth century BCE contain evidence of individuals who worked for the building commission after having worked as contractors. This was the case with Anaxilas and Damophanes, who both appear first as contractors in the accounts of the temple of Asclepius and then as commissioners in charge of letting out the contracts[77] in the accounts of the Thymele; Damophanes also appears in the accounts of the Fountain House.[78]

These examples show that the entrepreneurs did not necessarily stick to their job as contractors, but sometimes found themselves on the other side of the fence, working either as architects, building commissioners, or board members in charge of letting out contracts. When we also consider that they often did not hesitate to travel in order to perform contracts, and that they served as intermediaries between the workers, the architects and the building commission, it becomes clear that they must have been key agents for the adoption and diffusion of technical innovations. One of the most important technical innovations of the fourth century was the adoption of a new type of clamp for monumental construction, to which I now turn.

3 A Case Study of Technical Innovation: The Π-Clamp

In ancient Greek monumental architecture, stone blocks were often tied together with metal clamps, which had the primary function of guaranteeing

72 Roux 1979: 95–120.

73 *CID* II 97, l. 38–39. There is no conflict of interest here: the expenses made for the gymnasium were not overseen by the *naopoioi*, but by the Treasurers.

74 *CID* II 109 A, l. 7–8.

75 The same Epiteles was one of the commissioners of a festival at the Amphiareion of Oropos (*I. Oropos* 298), was granted a range of honors by the city of Delphi in 327 BCE (*FD* III 1: 408) and proposed a decree in Athens in 323–322 BCE (*IG* II^3 375).

76 *CID* II 31, l. 35, 39, 60; Prignitz 2014, n°1, l. 109; n°2, l. 170; n°3, l. 59, 64, 192.

77 Prignitz 2014: 165–166 has shown that the ἐγδοτῆρες and the θυμελοποιοί were not building commissioners, as was previously thought, but a board in charge of letting out the contracts. The building commissioners are not mentioned in the accounts.

78 Prignitz 2014: 293 (s.v. Δαμοφάνης); Prignitz wonders whether one should perhaps distinguish between two different Damophaneis.

the integrity of the buildings. Various types and shapes of clamps were used throughout Greek history. As they vary according to regions and times, they are sometimes taken as loose indicators of chronology. The use of different types of clamps in the same building can indicate that it was repaired at some point, or that different teams of workers worked on the construction. Few scholars have studied the clamps in their own right, and the syntheses and tables by Roland Martin remain unparalleled and useful, although in many cases the dating has been revised since then.[79]

Perhaps in the first half of the fourth century BCE, a new type of clamp appeared, commonly called Π-clamp because of its shape. The two vertical branches were inserted on either side of the joint between two blocks, usually on their bedding surfaces. This clamp shape was not entirely new: other Π-clamps existed before, especially in the Greek West, the Aegean Islands, and Asia Minor.[80] The fourth-century clamp distinguished itself from the others by the fact that it was made of a single piece of metal and by the shape of its cavity, which was rectangular, contrary to the so-called 'dovetail' Π-clamps.[81]

Π-clamps are often used as a vague indicator of chronology when dating stone constructions. Since their use became so preponderant in the Hellenistic period, it is generally assumed that a building presenting this type of clamp dates from this period or later and cannot, in any case, be earlier than the fourth century BCE. However, within the fourth century BCE, it is generally agreed upon that a more or less extensive use of Π-clamps in a building cannot be taken as a chronological indication, with commentators insisting instead on the variability of the workers' habits and economic considerations.[82] The situation is not helped by the fact that the chronology of the architecture of the fourth century, in particular of the Doric order, is far from being resolved. Just recently, the dating of some buildings has been significantly reassessed. Can we nonetheless attempt to date the 'birth' of this new clamp?

The first attestations of the Π-clamp seem to be localized in Delphi and Epidaurus. For some time, one could think that the earliest known example of its use in large-scale construction was the niche-portico *SD* 108, near the Southeastern entrance of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. The niche-portico

79 Martin 1965: 238–296. Other serviceable overviews include those by Orlandos (1968: 99–122) and Hellmann (2002: 93–95).

80 Martin 1965: 276–277.

81 Martin 1965: 273, 279; Orlandos 1968: 102–105, 109. Plain, rectangular cuttings for Π-clamps did occur in the Archaic period, although rarely and often in combination with other types of cuttings and clamps; see Wescoat 2012: 24 n. 25.

82 Pouilloux and Roux 1963: 12–14 attempted to outline the evolution of the Π-clamp in the fourth century BCE. However, a series of dates have been reassessed since then, making a number of the observations obsolete.

used to be attributed to the 'Navarchs' of the Spartan Lysander, with a date of 405–404 or 404–403 BCE, but the monument of the Navarchs has been identified since then as the monument *SD* 109, on the other side of the road. Consequently, the date of *SD* 108 had to be reconsidered. In terms of relative chronology, it is in any case prior to the construction of the base *SD* 105 and of the monument of the Argive kings (*SD* 113), which constitute *termini ante quos*. The latter also presents Π-clamps and is traditionally dated to 369 BCE or shortly after, but could possibly be a bit later. However, because the erection of the base *SD* 105 is also linked to events that happened in 369 BCE, this date remains a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the niche-portico *SD* 108.[83] Π-clamps were also used very sporadically in the bearers (that is, under the pavement) of the naos of the temple of Apollo, which probably started to be rebuilt in 366 BCE.[84] In the nearby sanctuary of Athena Pronaia, the famous Tholos, traditionally dated to ca. 380–370 BCE, and the so-called Limestone temple, which used to be dated to the 350s, both made a more extensive use of the Π-clamp.[85] Recent investigations concluded that both buildings must have belonged, in fact, to the second half of the fourth century BCE.[86]

With the recent reshuffling of the dates of monumental buildings in the region, it appears that the earliest known use of the Π-clamp must in fact be attributed to the temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus (fig. 2.2). Its dating, which has fluctuated between ca. 400 and ca. 360 BCE, had reached a near-consensus around 370 BCE, until Sebastian Prignitz recently moved it back to ca. 400–390. Prignitz's dating rests on an analysis of the lettering and the spelling of the inscriptions, on the style of the sculptures of the temple and on reconstructions of the careers of some of the craftsmen mentioned in the textual sources, but not on the architectural features.[87] In any case, the temple of Asclepius is a significant step in the development of the Π-clamp,[88] which quickly became widely used in Epidaurus, for the Thymele, which started to be built shortly after the temple of Asclepius, also presents numerous Π-clamps.[89]

83 Bommelaer 2012.

84 Courby 1927: 87; Bommelaer and Laroche 2015: 211.

85 Charbonneaux 1925: 23–24; Michaud 197 : 105–106.

86 Huber et al. 2022.

87 Prignitz 2014: 225–247 (225–226 for a useful summing up of the earlier dating). More recently, Virginie Mathé (2017: 138) has questioned this date and advocated for a later date, around 370 BCE, on the basis of the parallels with the accounts of Delphi: the accounting practices are similar and some craftsmen found in the Thymele accounts in Epidauros appear in the Delphian accounts between 343 and 335 BCE.

88 Martin 1965: 279.

89 Roux 1961: 183–184.

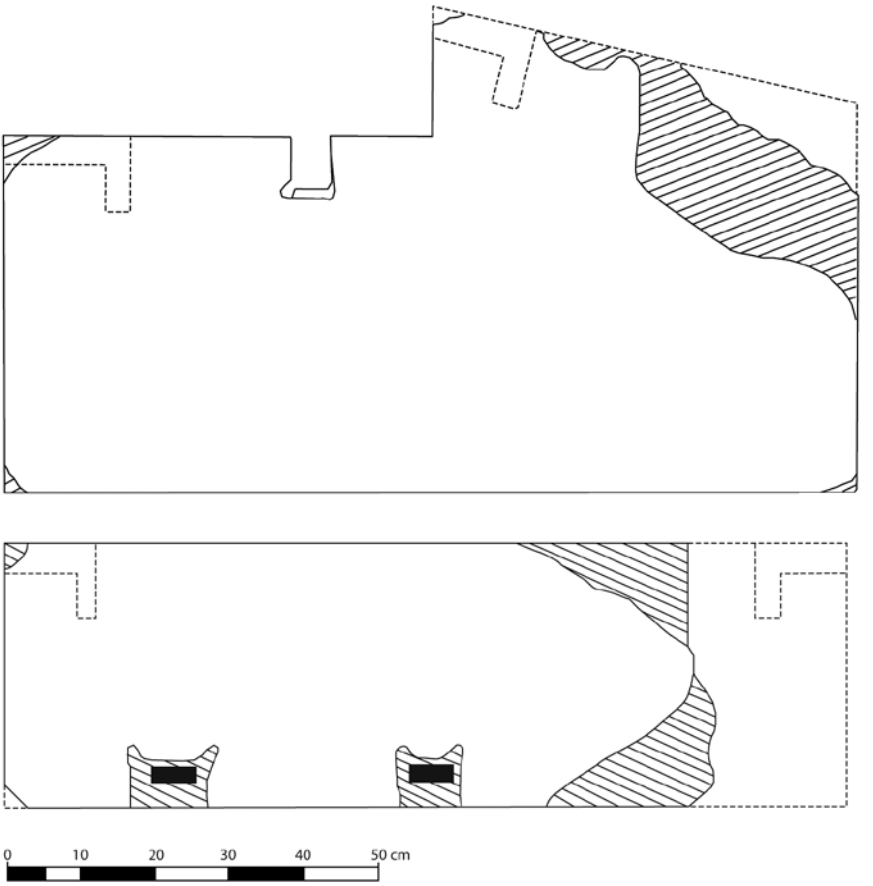

FIGURE 2.2 Fronts of tympanon block (above) and parpen block (below) of the temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus, with mortises for Π-clamp
DRAWING BY JEAN VANDEN BROECK-PARANT AFTER ROUX 1961:98 FIG. 19; 111 FIG. 24 (RESPECTIVELY)

For the first two years of the construction of the temple of Asclepius, the origins of the contractors are systematically mentioned in the building accounts. The entrepreneur Antimachus, who undertook to assemble the blocks of the 'visible' *krêpis*, where Π-clamps were found, was from Argos, as was another entrepreneur who undertook to assemble the blocks of the *sêkos*, which also bear traces of these clamps.[90] It is tempting to conclude from that evidence

90 Prignitz 2014 n°1, l. 5–6, 20; Roux 1961: 90–91, 110.

that the Argives were early adopters of the Π-clamp.[91] While this is a possibility, two elements call for caution. First, it must be stressed that the Epidaurian building accounts for the Temple of Asclepius do not give a detailed description of the works that were done, and it is not certain that the 'assemblage' of the blocks included the making and placing of the clamps.[92] Finally, and perhaps more importantly, there is no trace, to date, of a precocious usage of Π-clamps in Argive territory in the late fifth or in the early fourth century BCE. The South Stoa and the West Building of the Heraion—both dated to the second half of the fifth century—as well as the temple of Hera, which was completed at the end of the fifth or the beginning of the fourth century BCE, present mostly T-clamps[93] and the few early fourth-century buildings do not seem to have had Π-clamps either.[94]

And yet, it seems that in the course of the fourth century, the Π-clamp was used most enthusiastically in the Argolis and nearby Arcadia, as well as in Delphi, where Argive entrepreneurs are known to have been active. The most important testimonies, in that regard, are the ones associated with the sanctuary of Demeter Chthonia in Hermione, which saw an intensive building phase in the early fourth century BCE. Π-clamps were found in orthostates (fig. 2.3), which are 'almost identical' to the orthostates of the South Stoa and the West Building in Argos.[95] In Hermione, the connection with Argos and, more specifically, with Argive contractors is further evidenced by a fragmentary building inscription found in the wall of a nearby house, which is dated to the early fourth century BCE and resembles the early building inscriptions from Epidaurus. It is very likely that this inscription pertains to a construction in the sanctuary of Demeter. In line 9, orthostates are mentioned and while the name of the contractor is missing here, in lines 5 and 19, individuals, perhaps citizens of Hermione, are given a travel allowance to go to Argos, presumably in order to hire workmen.[96]

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91 For a discussion of the terms 'early adopter' and 'inventor', see Castelli, this volume, General Introduction.

92 It should be noted that mostly special clamps (for instance for lintels) are mentioned in this account. Prignitz 2014: 260 rightly supposes that the 'normal' clamps were included in the stone orders.

93 Blid 2021: 114 (South Stoa); Miller 1973: 14 (West Building); Pfaff 2003: 34 (temple of Hera). The use of T-clamps is consistent with the other features of the temple of Hera, which is more an epigone of Periclean architecture than a precursor of the Peloponnesian architecture of the fourth century BCE (Roux 1961: 58). It should be noted that cuttings for Π-clamps are found on some blocks of the temple, but that they certainly belong to later repairs (Pfaff 2003: 34).

94 See Pfaff 1989 for the Lower Stoa and the Northwest Building at the Argive Heraion, now both dated to the fourth century BCE.

95 Blid 2021: 126.

96 *IG* IV 742; see Blid 2021: 131.

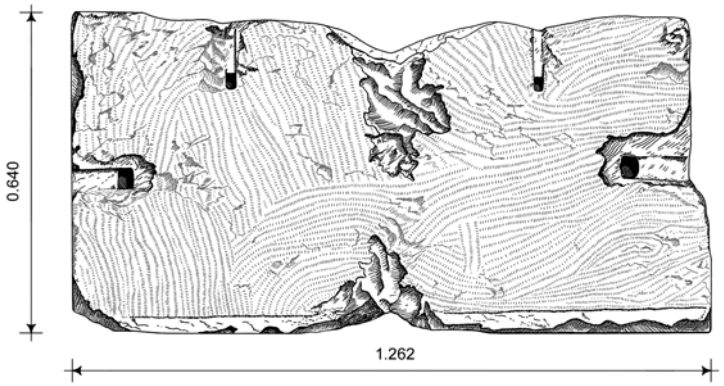

FIGURE 2.3 Top of orthostate block (O 4) of the sanctuary of Demeter Chthonia
ILLUSTRATION BY J. BLID, WITH PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR, AFTER BLID 2021: 116 FIG. 18

Another possible indication comes from the area of Hermione. Some reused blocks in the Venetian wall of the Bisti promontory present cavities for Π-clamps. These blocks are located in the vicinity of a series of four bases with dedications to Demeter Chthonia, two of which mention that Argive artists made the statues which were placed on the bases; these artists can be dated respectively to ca. 400 and ca. 370 BCE.[97]

In Epidaurus, as already mentioned, the Thymele was erected shortly after the temple of Asclepius. The first parts of the Thymele to be built (which include the foundations, the peristasis, the cella wall, and the basis of the interior Corinthian columns) present Π-clamps, while the blocks of the later parts are tied together with T-clamps. Georges Roux compared the Π-clamps of the Thymele with those of the temple of Athena Alea at Tegea.[98] All the clamps of the temple of Athena Alea at Tegea (dated to the third quarter of the fourth century BCE[99]) are Π-shaped.[100] The temple of Zeus at Nemea, which is usually considered to have been heavily influenced by the Athena temple,[101] also presents only Π-clamps[102] and may have had as an architect a man also active in Argos.[103]

97 I owe the information about the blocks with Π-clamps to Jesper Blid (*per epist.*). See Jameson 1953 for the bases with the dedications.
98 Roux 1961: 184.
99 Østby 2014: 341–346; Hill 1966: 44–45 (ca. 345–330).
100 Dugas et al. 1924: 55–56.
101 Winter 1982: 400.
102 Hill 1966.
103 Miller 1994.

Several Argive entrepreneurs are known to have worked in Delphi in the fourth century BCE, Nicodamus and Pancrates certainly being among the most important. The latter worked extensively on the temple of Apollo, and masons' marks referring to him (with the letters ΠΑΓ or ΠΑΝ) were found on various blocks of the cella, including in the substructions.[104] Some of the bearer blocks of the cella that present Π-clamps also bear masons' marks. One of those marks reads ΔΑΟ,[105] a likely reference to the contractor Daos of Megara, known to have collaborated on at least one contract with Pancrates of Argos.[106] The general importance of the Argives in the rebuilding of the temple of Apollo in Delphi is further attested by the large number of *naopoioi* from Argos compared to the other represented states.[107]

Still in Delphi, the already mentioned Monument of the Argive Kings, which presents Π-clamps, was dedicated by the Argives according to Pausanias.[108] It presents two inscriptions which further attest the Argive character of the monument: one, below the statue of Danaos, reads Ἀργεῖ[οι] or Ἀργεί[ων][109] and the other, on a pedestal block, records that the sculptor 'Antiphanes of Argos made' the statue. The latter block was attached to the blocks on its right and left sides with Π-clamps.[110]

Thus, a series of elements point toward an Argive origin of the Π-clamp. However, the nature of the evidence and the context of the period call for caution. Argos seems to have been one of the main providers of skilled labor for monumental construction at the time,[111] hence its marked presence in the sources. It would be rash to credit Argive entrepreneurs specifically with this invention. However, it is likely that they were among its early adopters. In Athens, it is only toward the end of the fourth century BCE that the Π-clamp started to be used, often still in combination with T-clamps.[112]

Whether the entrepreneurs and craftsmen came up with the new clamp shape themselves or not, the ultimate decision to implement them was not only theirs. The architects, as we have seen, were in charge of supervising the works at different stages of the project. Having (presumably) good engineering skills, they had the capability and the authority to accept or refuse

104 Amandry and Hansen 2010: 33–35, 494.
105 Amandry and Hansen 2010: 363, pl. 45 T 425.
106 *CID* II 49 A, col. I, l. 2–6.
107 See the useful table by Roux (1979: annexe 6).
108 Paus. 10.10.5.
109 Bommelaer and Laroche 2015: 140.
110 Marcadé 1953: I, 5.
111 Feyel 2006: 348–356.
112 Martin 1965: 274–275.

the use of specific techniques. Furthermore, the payments of the contractors (and, sometimes, the fines inflicted on them for faulty works), depended on these checks, and it is unlikely that they would have deliberately used types of clamps that had not been previously approved by the architect. An inscription from Lebadeia giving specifications for the construction of the exterior pavement of the temple of Zeus Basileus (ca. 220 BCE) is quite explicit about the importance of the verification of clamps. The entrepreneurs had to submit their work to the scrutiny of the architect and the architect's assistant; the former checked the working of the blocks and their placement, while the latter verified the joints and the beddings of each block.[113] Only then was the entrepreneur allowed to seal the stones together with clamps, an important action that sanctioned the suitability of the work done so far. As such, the placing of the clamps was the object of even more attention, as described in minute detail in the following passage:

> However that entrepreneur shall proceed with the introduction of the dowels and the clamps and dovetails, the weighing [of these clamps and dowels] and the sealing with lead all in the presence of the *naopoioi*, and he shall not fasten anything in secret. And if he fastens anything [in secret], he shall do everything again from scratch.[114]

The insistence on the fact that the fastening should be done in the presence of witnesses can only be interpreted in terms of the money value that the clamps represented. Metal was expensive and the contractors could be tempted to use fewer clamps, or to make thinner clamps than had been agreed in the contract in order to make more profit. The temptation must have been all the greater as the clamps were concealed as soon as a second course of blocks was laid down, and could not be checked anymore. In this regard, the presence, during the operation, of the *naopoioi*, who were in charge of the financial aspects of the construction, is significant: since metal was so expensive, it was important to make sure that the product delivered corresponded to the price paid. The inscription from Lebadeia is unusually detailed and dates to a later period than the one under consideration.[115] However, its similarities with other contracts have been pointed out, including the one from Tegea dating to the

113 *IG* VII 3073, l. 159–162.

114 *IG* VII 3073, l. 170–174.

115 For a recent study, which shows the peculiarities of this inscription, see Pitt 2014.

fourth century.[116] While the regulations discussed above may not have been in force on all working sites of the fourth century, it is safe to assume that it reflects concerns and practices that already existed at the time. Clauses pertaining to inspections of the works are found in other contracts, including already in the fourth century BCE.[117] In particular, a fourth-century Athenian contract shows a high level of scrutiny for the insertion of dowels and their sheathing with lead, which had to be done according to the architects' specifications.[118]

To sum up, the fastening of the blocks with clamps was a collective operation, perhaps the most collective one in the whole construction process, since the entrepreneurs, the architect, and the building commissioners were directly involved in it. However decisive the role of the entrepreneurs was in the 'invention' of the new clamp, its adoption and diffusion depended on various categories of human agents, at various levels of hierarchy and agency. This is a good illustration of William H. Sewell's claim that 'agency is collective as well as individual'.[119]

4 Explaining the Π-Clamp's Success: Non-human Agents, Structures, and the Power of Context

Having clarified this point, we can start looking into the reasons why the Π-clamp was so widely adopted, to the point that it would become the norm in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In doing so, I will address the contribution of inanimate objects and human institutions to the new clamp's success. Before going further, some points need to be clarified. In the framework of this chapter, 'agency' is understood as the power to act upon something, and does not imply any intent or will. As such, it is close to the definition of John McNeill, who extends agency beyond the human realm.[120] However, here I am going

116 *IG* V 2, 6. For the similarities between the two inscriptions, see Choisy (1884: 187–188), with similar clauses presented side by side. According to Rhodes and Osborne 2004: 295, the Tegean contract was not linked to a specific project, but had a 'general force'. This might explain the absence of more specific clauses, such as the one about the clamps and dowels in Lebadeia. The Tegean contract does, however, insist on the contractors' compliance with the *epimelomenoi*, 'those put in charge' (l. 45–51).

117 See Burford 1969: 91–102 and Feyel 2006: 491–495 for references and discussions.

118 *IG* II^2 1678 l. 5–6 (= *ID* 104–4). The text is dated to shortly before 360 BCE (for the date, see Chankowski 2008: 202–206) and pertains to the construction of an Ionic building in Delos. The text also specifies that each block will be placed in the presence of the assistant architect (l. 6–8).

119 Sewell 1992: 21.

120 See McNeill, this volume, Chapter 1.

further, by granting agency to inanimate objects. The alleged problem of attributing agency to minerals, which are inert things and, therefore, apparently unable to *act*, can be solved if one takes a different time perspective, either by adopting a larger scale[121] (in geological time, minerals are formed and transformed, and they move) or, on the contrary, by developing 'a detailed temporal anatomy of the act'.[122] Human institutions and rules are seen as integral to the issue since they both constraint and enable agency.[123] In this sense they represent what is usually called 'structures' in the field of social sciences, that is—to put it simply—'patterns'. Structures and agency 'presuppose' each other and therefore must be considered together when trying to explain innovation.[124]

A hypothesis of Jean-François Bommelaer on the emergence of the Π-clamp that it was originally made for and used in breccia construction.[125] According to Bommelaer, there was a practical, structural advantage of using such clamps in this type of stone, which is more brittle than limestone: the vertical pins of the Π-clamp, which were rooted deeper in the stone, were better suited than other types of clamps. T-clamps, for instance, were only attached to the surface of the block and would have run the risk of not being firmly clamped, defeating their very purpose. Affordance, defined by Donald Norman as perceived possible actions offered by the environment (in this case, a type of stone) to an observer, would have played a major role in this case.[126] In other words, the stone itself would have been an agent of change in the sense that it dictated the use of specific shapes of clamps. It might well have been the case, at least at the very early stages of the diffusion of the Π-clamp, even though the (so far) only known example of its use in breccia construction was probably not as early as was previously thought.[127] In any case, it does not account for its

121 Bennett 2010: 10–11.

122 Malafouris 2008: 25.

123 Giddens 1993: 114.

124 Sewell 1992: 4.

125 Bommelaer 2012: 171 n. 68.

126 Norman 2013: 10–13. The term 'affordance' was first coined by J.J. Gibson; for the most detailed description of the concept, see Gibson 1979: 127–137.

127 See above, Section 3. A well-dated monument of the early fourth century, that of Dexileus in the Kerameikos in Athens (394 BCE) presents breccia foundations. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say whether they presented clamps at all. The only clamps known in this monument are the four T-shaped mortises on the Pentelic base of the stele; see Ensoli 1987: 169 n. 12. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this suggestion, which deserves further investigation.

relatively rapid expansion, in the course of the fourth century BCE, into limestone and even marble construction.[128]

Another contributing factor that has been invoked is the economic advantage of the Π-clamp in comparison to other types of clamps. The new clamp was indeed cheaper to produce because it was easier to make, as it only required the bending of one piece of metal (the T-clamp, in contrast, needed at least two solderings), and because it needed less metal for a similar effect.[129] The economic aspect must have been decisive and, in a number of cases, its use can only be explained by economic reasons. For instance, in Stratos it was used along with T-clamps on the same course of blocks.[130]

This economic advantage must have been noticed early on by the entrepreneurs, as it could make them more competitive. In the classical and Hellenistic periods, most of the building contracts were awarded through bid solicitation.[131] Heralds were sent abroad and announcements were made in public spaces to inform potential contractors that works were being let out, and to invite them to make offers. Provided that he could present suitable guarantors, the successful contractor was probably chosen on the basis of his reputation but also, and perhaps more importantly, of the price he was offering to perform the job. From the perspective of the entrepreneurs, therefore, lowering their own costs was a way of offering a more competitive price and, therefore, to increase their chances of winning the bid. The competitive system of bid solicitations, therefore, can be considered as the main *structuring* rule that enabled agents to exert their creativity, in turn favoring the adoption and diffusion of the Π-clamp.

If the early date of the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus proposed by Prignitz is confirmed, it would make it the first large building to make extensive use of Π-clamps. This would be consistent with the idea of competition as a social structure eliciting change, considering that the temple had a relatively low cost. Indeed, the whole construction cost about 24 talents, a rather low price if compared to the estimated 400 talents of the temple of Apollo at Delphi,[132] which dates from about the same period, or even to the Thymele, whose cost has

128 Π-clamps were used, for instance, in the lower parts of the Thymele at Epidaurus, which comprised marble courses (Roux 1961: 183–184). However, it is interesting to note that in the upper parts, T-clamps were preferred, perhaps for structural reasons (Roux 1961: 142).

129 Roux 1961: 183–184; Bommelaer 2012: 171.

130 Courby and Picard 1924: 83.

131 Burford 1969: 159–166.

132 Mathé 2017: 144.

been estimated at 50 to 60 talents.[133] Various elements explain this price difference, notably the steep, difficult terrain of Delphi and the size of the building and of its blocks. In comparison, the terrain on which the Epidaurians built their temple was flat and relatively easy to access (from the port of the town, there was about 11 km with a gentle slope). On top of these favorable conditions, the Epidaurians built a temple of moderate size, and in good but simple materials (the Thymele, by contrast, made extensive use of Pentelic marble). The whole construction process took only five years or less. The temple was not a cheap building, since the sculpted decoration was made of marble, but it certainly was a modest one if compared to other constructions of the time. Based on these observations, one can assume that the Epidaurians kept a keen eye on expenses and favored contractors who were able to offer lower prices.

The competition that might have led to the adoption of a new form of clamp would not have existed without the favorable context of an intense building activity that occurred in the fourth century BCE, in particular in Delphi and Epidaurus. The sanctuary of Asclepius underwent a major phase of monumentalization which started off with the construction of the first temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus. This monumentalization coincided with an increased popularity of the healing god and, perhaps, with a political agenda aiming at tightening his links to Epidaurus.[134] In any case, it is at this time that the cult started to attract a wider audience and acquired regional importance.[135] In Delphi, the destruction of the temple of Apollo (probably in 373 BCE) resulted in the start of a new ambitious building program, in which the temple was rebuilt and the sanctuary was reorganized.[136] These two contexts no doubt stimulated the building activity at the time. The fact that the building programs were more or less simultaneous, combined with the relative geographic proximity of Delphi and Epidaurus, favored the circulation of craftsmen and entrepreneurs and the transmission of skills and techniques across the whole region. The spreading of ideas and forms is illustrated by the erection, only a few years apart, of round colonnaded buildings, the Thymele in Epidaurus and the Tholos in Delphi. The radically innovative aspect of these monuments shows that the authorities of the sanctuaries were striving to be at the forefront of novelty or, at the very least, that they were open to innovative architectural forms.

133 Hellmann 2002: 57. Stanier 1953 estimated that the whole Parthenon cost about 469 talents.

134 Burford 1969: 18–21.

135 Mathé 2017.

136 Perrier 2019.

FIGURE 2.4 Map of the main places mentioned in the text; by Jean Vanden Broeck-Parant

5 Conclusion

Architects were important agents of architectural changes in terms of design. The evolution and innovations of the Doric order must have circulated mainly in the form of treatises and specifications written by them. Their separation from the world of the entrepreneurs, however, was not airtight, far from it: architects could become entrepreneurs, and vice versa, which facilitated the circulation of new ideas. The entrepreneurs could also have access to positions with higher decision-making power, such as building commissions, where they could encourage implementing new techniques and methods based on their skill and experience. This versatility, combined with the fact that entrepreneurs were in close contact with all the parties involved in building contracts, made them efficient 'connectors' who enabled and encouraged the diffusion of new ideas. The case study of the Π-clamp, however, shows that their execution was subject to the approval of all the parties involved. It also illustrates the importance of taking into account non-human agents, as well as institutions. The materials themselves might have originally prompted the use of specific shapes of clamps. The institutions, in this case the awarding of contracts by bid solicitations, encouraged the entrepreneurs to adopt a cheaper kind of clamp in order to be more competitive. This competition, in turn, was made possible by a booming labor market and a favorable context of intense building activity in the sanctuaries of the region.

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CHAPTER 3

Agents of Change around the Valley of the Muses

Robin van Vliet and Onno van Nijf

1 Introduction

The city of Thespiae in Boeotia was famed for two contests, the *Mouseia*, celebrated in the sanctuary of the Muses at the foot of Mount Helicon, and the *Erôtideia*, in honor of the city's main god Eros.[1] From the first century BCE onwards these contests became the object of intense interaction between Greece and Rome.[2] With the arrival of Rome in the later Hellenistic age, a period of social and political turmoil had begun. Unlike other Boeotian cities, Thespiae managed to stay on the good side of Rome. The city faced the influx of Italian traders (*negotiatores*), whose presence led to an increasing exploitation of town and countryside. While these Italian *negotiatores* began to dominate civic social and economic life, a pro-Roman group of Thespian landowners began to further their own position by establishing good connections with Roman dignitaries and with the local Italian community. Festivals played an important part in this process. The festivals were re-dedicated to Rome, and events celebrating Rome were added to the program that now attracted competitors from all over the Roman East. The festivals became the *locus* where the new relationship between Thespiae and Rome was negotiated, expressed and disseminated.

This is an example of a wider trend whereby Greek cities drew the Romans into the social and cultural system with which they themselves were familiar.[3] We propose that this process may be considered from the perspective of Anchoring Innovation: the ways by which new situations are connected ('anchored') to what people expect and comprehend (the 'anchors').[4] This

1 On the *Mouseia*, see Knoepfler 1996; Schachter 2016; Manieri 2009: 313–340; on the *Erôtideia*, see Knoepfler 1997; Manieri 2009: 341–346.

2 On the Thespian festivals, see van Nijf and van Dijk 2020: 116–121. On Boeotian festivals as a venue for interaction with Rome, see van Nijf and Williamson 2016; Papazarkadas 2019. For their role in the development of Boeotian identity, see Grigsby 2017.

3 Gruen 1984.

4 On the notion of Anchoring Innovation, see Sluiter 2017. It is important to note that anchoring processes are dynamic: 'anchors' can be constructed and modified, which makes their

notion helps us to understand how the traditional festival culture was an anchor, shaping the interactions between Thespiae and Rome in multiple ways. We will argue that anchoring was not only crucial for Rome to legitimize her rule, but was likewise important for the Thespians to understand and to adapt to Roman hegemony.

In this chapter we will take a closer look at the issue of agency in this process. We shall identify the main agents of change, investigate their role, and consider the cultural and political changes they brought about. For the purpose of this chapter we distinguish three categories of agents. First, we will focus on *human* agency and consider the institutions, groups, and individuals who were involved in the organization of the Thespian festivals. Secondly, we will consider the role of the participants and spectators, arguably the largest group of agents operating in these festivals. Finally, we want to broaden the perspective by considering the role of non-humans, such as objects and places, in order to explore their impact. This choice may require some explanation: over the last few decades historians have increasingly turned their attention to material culture and started to place objects at the center of their historical narratives.[5] The idea behind this 'material turn' is that material culture is not simply a passive reflection of human activities, but also an active force that enables, constraints, shapes, forces, and affects them.[6] This entanglement of humans and objects is also referred to as 'object agency', i.e. the notion that things act and affect others, and therefore possess some kind of agency too.[7]

Whatever terminology is preferred, in this chapter we want to show that it is only through a consideration of the interplay between humans on the one hand and the impact of objects and places with their affordances (i.e. the possibilities for human action they provide) on the other hand that we can start to understand the dynamics of the interactions between Thespiae, its festivals, and Rome.[8]

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significance subject to societal negotiation and change. On the dynamic nature of anchoring, see Sluiter 2017: 24–25 and the introduction to this volume. The multi-layering of anchoring processes, both from a synchronic and diachronic perspective, is a notion that the first author of this chapter is working on as part of her PhD project; see van Vliet 2022.

5 For an overview of the debate, see Trentmann 2009. Recent studies that put objects at the center of their narratives include Gerritsen and Riello 2015; Van Oyen 2016; Osborne 2021.

6 See e.g. Van Oyen 2016: 1.

7 On object agency in Actor-Network Theory, see Latour 2005.

8 'Affordances' refers to the relation between objects and the possibilities for human action they provide. See Gibson 1979.

2 Institutions and Organizers

Who were the organizers of the Thespian contests? We will start with the *Mouseia*, which were the oldest of the two festivals. The *Mouseia* must have had a long local history, but only become epigraphically visible in the third century BCE, when the festival became a stephanitic and penteteric event.[9] It would seem that until the turn of the first century BCE the *Mouseia* were a product of joint organization by the city of Thespiae and the Isthmian and Nemean guild of Dionysiac *technitai*, and later a local branch of the Dionysiac *technitai* affiliated with the Helicon.[10] It is clear, however, that the city and its officials played the leading role, as it was the city that had taken the initiative to invite the *technitai*. The main responsibility usually seems to have rested with the civic *agônothetês*, i.e. the festival president, who was assisted by the civic priest of the Muses, a priest representing the *technitai*, a civic *grammateus* and two fire-carriers (*purphoroi*), one from the city and one representing the *technitai*.[11] The primacy of the civic officials is clear from the fact that the inscriptions always listed them before the officials of the *technitai*.[12] From the second half of the first century CE the involvement of professional organizations is no longer recorded, and responsibility for the organization now rested with the city officials and imperial priests.[13]

The *Erôtideia* were probably not organized before the second century BCE.[14] They were often organized jointly with the *Mouseia* and also appear to have been civic events. It has been suggested that in the first century CE one had to have been *agônothetês* of the *Erôtideia* first, in order to become eligible for this position in the *Mouseia*.[15]

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9 On the reorganization see the most recent discussion in Schachter 2016, with further references. On the reorganization(s): *IThesp.* 152–158. For the terminology, Remijsen 2011.

10 On the joint organization see e.g. Aneziri 2007: 71–72. On the role of *technitai* in the organization of festivals see also Le Guen 2001a and 2001b and Aneziri 2003. On the Heliconian branch of *technitai* see Marchand 2016. Examples include *IThesp.* 165 and 170. It is possible that this local branch of *technitai* was instituted after the Roman senate had arbitrated in a dispute between the Athenian and Isthmian and Nemean branch of *technitai*, in which also the Theban *technitai* and those installed elsewhere in Boeotia were involved. See *FD* III 2:70 ll. 40 and 50, as well as Roesch 1982: 193–194, Le Guen 2001a: 157, and Le Guen 2001b: 23.

11 Manieri 2009: 329–330. Examples include *IThesp.* 167, 169 and 171. On the role of the *purphoroi* in the context of the *Mouseia*, see Marchand 2016: 115.

12 Aneziri 2007: 71. Examples include *IThesp.* 156, 165, and 172.

13 Examples include *IThesp.* 177–178 and 180.

14 See the discussion in Knoepfler 1997 and Manieri 2009: 341–343 on the chronology of the *Erôtideia*.

15 Manieri 2009: 327.

What do we know about the individuals who filled these posts? Prosopographical evidence indicates that a small number of local elite families provided most of the *agônothetai*, priests, *purphoroi*, and *grammateis*.[16] In the first century CE this pool of local elite families shrunk even further. This reduction was synchronous to the sharp population decline that the city faced under Roman hegemony, but may have also been related to the process of increasing concentration of landholding and capital in the hands of the wealthier class that had started in the course of the first century BCE and that continued with the support of Rome.[17]

We may illustrate this process by zooming in on one prominent Thespian family that played a central role in Thespian festival life from the Hellenistic well into the imperial period. The inscriptions relating to this family were found together in the Byzantine surrounding wall. We can follow their activities thanks to the studies by Jamot and Jones, who have reconstructed the genealogy, and subsequent studies by Marchand and Müller, who have further discussed this family's ties with Rome (see fig. 3.1).[18]

The first known members of this family appear in a fragmentary victor list of the *Mouseia* of ca. 210–203 BCE.[19] There a certain Ariston had been holding the office of *agônothetês* (for the second time), while another individual by the name of Ariston son of Mondon—who was probably related—had been the priest of the Muses.[20] At some moment in the late first century BCE or early first century CE we encounter another member of this family, by the name of Polycratides, son of Anthemion, who made his contribution to festival life by strengthening his city's agonistic infrastructure.[21] An honorary inscription set up by the *Rhômaioi*—the local community of Italian *negotiatores*—tells us that he was 'the first to provide them with a gymnasium' and to 'supply them with oil'.[22] The donation of a gymnasium, a typically Greek polis institution, was an important attempt to integrate the newcomers into Greek festival culture, and to anchor their place in Thespian society.[23] The active role that Polycratides played in the interactions of his home town with Rome can also be illustrated

16 Manieri 2009: 327–328.

17 Bintliff and Snodgrass 2017.

18 Jamot 1902a; Jones 1970; Marchand 2013; Müller 2017.

19 *IThesp.* 161. Recently a slightly later date was proposed by Kalliontzis 2020: 39.

20 Cf. Schachter 2016: 348–349.

21 On Polycratides, see Jones 1970: 225–228; Kajava 1989: 144–145; Kantiréa 2007: 167–168; Marchand 2013: 158–159.

22 *IThesp.* 373.

23 Müller 1996: 161 with the argument that at the same time this gesture also set this Italian community apart, for they had to exercise in their own gymnasium.

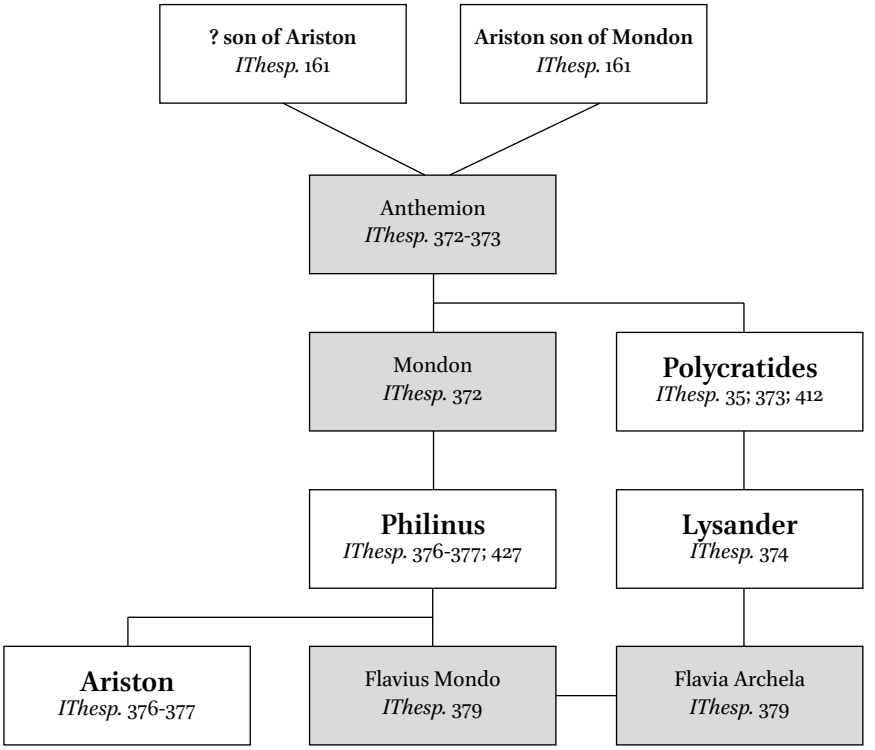

FIGURE 3.1 Thespian family of Polycratides. Family tree based on stemma I in Jones 1970: 231 and updated texts by Roesch. The family members discussed are in bold.

by a small statue base that he dedicated to his patron Titus Statilius Taurus.[24] Taurus was a prominent member of the Roman senatorial family of the Statilii Tauri, who were active in Thespiae between the late first century BCE and the early first century CE.[25] They even had an impact on festival life, as some editions of the *Mouseia* included the composition of encomia on Taurus.[26] The family even received their own cult in the city, in which Polycratides perhaps acted as a priest.[27] In any case, the dedication of the statue and the gymnasium shows that Polycratides was instrumental in initiating and maintaining different kinds of ties with Rome and with the various layers of the Roman population in Thespiae.

In the first century CE other members of this family also played their part in fostering the integration of Rome in the city's agonistic culture, anchoring the

24 *IThesp.* 412.

25 See Kajava 1989 on the Statilii in Thespiae.

26 For the encomium on Tauros, see *IThesp.* 174.

27 On the cult of Taurus, see Schachter 1994: 53–55; Thériault 2009, and Marchand 2013. For the suggestion that Polycratides perhaps acted as a priest, see Schachter 1994: 54.

position of the Roman emperor within the contests' structures, while simultaneously strengthening their own position in a traditional manner. The first to do so was Polycratides' son, Lysander. He was honored in traditional manner by the *boulê* and the *dêmos* on account of his 'noble way of life' (*kalokagathia*). Moreover, he was also honored for having been *agônothetês* of the *Kaisareia Erôtideia Rhômaia*—a new edition of the contest specifically set up to honor the Roman emperor—as well as for having been an imperial priest 'at his own expense'.[28] As the imperial priests were responsible for the organization of the cult festivals in honor of the Roman emperors, we may assume that he spent generously on the contests.

Moreover, a nephew and grandnephew of Lysander took the involvement even further. The nephew, Philinus son of Mondo, dedicated a stoa to Rome and the imperial family.[29] Two decrees set up by the polis and *dêmos* tell us that the grandnephew, by the name of Ariston son of Philinus, carried out his duties as an *agônothetês* of the *Erôtideia and Kaisareia* and the *Mouseia and Sebastês Iulias*, an edition of the competitions especially set up for the Roman emperor and the empress, at least twice.[30]

In conclusion, for more than three generations members of this family provided their fellow citizens with traditional Greek festivals, which in the process became instrumental for the establishment of Roman power. They were of course not alone, and we may assume that they drew on a familiar repertoire that was shared by other families in Thespiae and beyond. In doing so, such families facilitated the anchoring of Roman power in Thespiae while simultaneously anchoring their own status and position in those of their ancestors.

3 Participants and Spectators

The magistrates and officials involved in the running of the contests were crucial, but numerically they made up only a small proportion of the agents involved in the festivals. We should therefore consider the second, and largest, category of operating agents: the participants and the spectators. For festivals could only succeed if people were willing *en masse* to come to visit them and to participate in them.

We will first focus on the participants. Who were they? And what exactly was their role in the propagation of these festivals and in the interaction with Rome? The Thespian contests must have attracted two main categories of participants. First, the artists (*technitai*), who competed in the *Mouseia* in such

28 *IThesp.* 374.
29 *IThesp.* 427.
30 *IThesp.* 376 and 377.

diverse categories as competitions for heralds and trumpeters, as well as rhapsodic, musical, dramatic, and encomiastic competitions.[31] Secondly, the contestants in the running, boxing, and equestrian events of the *Erôtideia*.[32]

We are informed about their activities mainly from epigraphic sources, including the inscriptions that were set up for successful artists and athletes to commemorate their victories, as well as honorific texts and the records of the activities of the associations of *technitai*. The most important source, however, is the long lists of victors that the organizers set up to advertise their festival. Analyses of this material have revealed that from the fourth century to the turn of the first century BCE the *Mouseia* mainly had a local reach. The origin of participants was primarily local and regional, with most contestants competing from the wider Boeotian region or other places that were geographically nearby, such as Athens (fig. 3.2).[33]

The situation changed after the introduction of the *Erôtideia Rhômaia* in the first century BCE, when the catchment area of the Thespian festivals significantly expanded. The introduction of athletic and equestrian contests naturally enlarged the number of opportunities to compete in the city. It is striking, however, that the contestants now also seem to have come from further afield, as is shown in the distribution map for the *Erôtideia* and *Mouseia* after the first century BCE (fig. 3.3).

The larger geographical reach of the festivals was of course a source of pride for Thespiae. The participants may be seen as the representatives of their cities. Their details and origins would be recorded upon registration, were publicly announced during victory ceremonies, and commemorated in Thespian lists of victors. Upon returning home, their achievements were again celebrated in welcoming ceremonies and often recorded in inscriptions that specified in much detail where the victories were obtained.[34] Such ceremonies and monuments, then, testified to not only the achievements of the individual victors, but also served the purposes of the Thespian organizers, and of the

31 Examples of categories in the *Mouseia* can be found in *IThesp.* 167–174 and 177–180. Manieri 2009: 339–340 lists the cities sending artists to the *Mouseia*, including the programs they participated in.

32 Athletic events in *IThesp.* 175 and athletic and equestrian events in *IThesp.* 191. See also the statement in Paus. 9.31.3.

33 On the origin of the participants, see Papazarkadas 2019 and van Nijf and van Dijk 2020, with further references. An overview of the origin of victors can also be retrieved via www.connectedcontests.org. A small cluster of names from Asia Minor indicates that some competitors in early editions of the *Mouseia* traveled longer distances. Papazarkadas 2019: 213–216 explains their participation partly on the basis of *sungeneia*, i.e. the kinship links that existed between the Greeks in Asia Minor and Boeotia. Manieri 2009: 340 mentions the possible participation of *technitai* from Ionia and the Hellespont.

34 Slater 2012: 144–145 for the ceremonies; for the commemoration of (Olympic) victors and victor lists in general, see Christesen 2007.

FIGURE 3.2 Catchment area of the *Mouseia* before the first century BCE
Note: The maps in this chapter have been created by Robin van Vliet, integrating data drawn from epigraphical sources (see also www.connectedcontests.org) with the data-visualization software tool Palladio (https://hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio/).

FIGURE 3.3 Catchment area of the *Mouseia* and *Erôtideia* from the first century BCE to the second century CE

hometowns of the victors, by advertising the inter-city connections afforded by the festival network. However, there was also a political dimension, as the Thespian festivals clearly flagged the pro-Roman orientation of the city, which other cities acknowledged and supported by sending out contestants. In this way the participants played an important role in the larger geographical recognition of these Rome-oriented competitions and so enhanced support for the new political order. Simultaneously, the commemoration of their victories—in both their hometowns and the organizing city—gave a permanent expression to the message of solidarity among Greek cities, and between these cities and Rome.

The success of these festivals in the interaction with Rome may further be inferred from their popularity with Romans themselves. We saw above that the Hellenized Roman businessmen in Thespiae had joined the agonistic life of the city, but the festivals also proved popular with the Hellenized community of Roman settlers of different parts of Greece, as may be derived from inscriptions dating to the second century CE. Victory lists show that many of the known contestants from this period had clear onomastic and prosopographical links with citizens of the Roman colonies, most notably Corinth.[35] This may suggest that the Thespian contests were fed by long-standing connections with the world of Roman traders and settlers. Through their participation, the Romans themselves became an active part of the Thespian festival network. The most striking example of the success of this integration is perhaps the Roman emperor-to-be Tiberius, who won the chariot race, the most prestigious competition of the *Kaisareia Erôtideia and Rhômaia*.[36] What makes Tiberius' entry all the more significant is that the only other contest we know he had participated in were the Olympic games.[37] This suggests that the Thespian competitions must have been of particular importance to the Romans.

Secondly, the spectators also played an important role in the propagation of the Thespian contests and their pro-Roman orientation. The movements of most of the ordinary spectators are lost, of course, even though we do know that people were prepared to travel long distances to visit contests.[38] We are, however, a little bit better informed about the activities of a special category of spectators, the civic delegates known as *theôroi*. *Theôroi* were the officials sent out by the city that was about to organize a festival to announce the

35 Müller 2017: 237 and Müller 1996. Examples include *IThesp.* 177 and 178.

36 *IThesp.* 188.

37 *IvO* 220.

38 EKM 1 Beroia, 398, for a baker from Macedonia who had traveled repeatedly to Olympia.

upcoming celebration.[39] They were hosted by the *theôrodokoi*, whose duty it was to look after these official guests. *Theôriai* were by no means neutral as they reflected the formal festive bonds that existed between the cities and sanctuaries involved. It is not surprising, therefore, that such relationships were carefully registered and often commemorated. Organizing cities would set up long lists of the cities that had sent out *theôroi* to attend the festival—or honor individual *theôroi*. Moreover, theoric relations were often also recorded and celebrated in their hometowns.[40] Such monuments gave permanence to the sense of solidarity and community among cities and between cities and sanctuaries, and hence were crucial for the international standing and success of the competitions.

The evidence for the activities of *theôroi* in Thespiae is unfortunately limited. Most of the evidence concerns the establishment of the penteteric festival in the third century BCE. We have a number of sadly fragmented texts which show how the Thespians made sure that the *technitai*, whom they had contracted to organize their festival, would also send round the *theôroi*.[41] A fragmented Athenian inscription generally dated to after the Mithridatic Wars, however, may shed some light on the role of Athenian *theôroi* visiting and advertising the first *Erôtideia and Rhômaia*.[42] The decree shows that Athenian *theôroi* had been invited to attend the festival. Back home, the *theôroi* reported that the 'sacred things had gone well', and the *arkhitheôros* (the head of the sacred embassy) and other *theôroi* were praised for their successful visit to the Thespian contest.[43] By visiting the new competitions and recognizing their status, the *theôroi* simultaneously acknowledged that the renamed *Erôtideia* were now taking place under the *aegis* of Rome.[44] We may be sure that those Athenian *theôroi* stand proxy for the role of a larger group of spectators in this process, as Athens was likely not the only city that had been officially invited to attend the competition. In this way, then, this special group of spectators played a crucial role in creating an image of widespread support for the new political order: by formally acknowledging the status of the rebranded competitions

39 Rutherford 2013.

40 For example, *IG* II^3 1 1390, a decree honoring a group of *theôroi* from Miletus, granting them Athenian citizenship. Compare *IG* II^3 1 1372, a decree found on the Athenian acropolis honoring an earlier Milesian delegation who had sacrificed at the Eleusinian mysteries.

41 *IThesp.* 155–156 on the role of the *technitai*.

42 *IG* II^2 1054 (dated to ca. 125–100 BCE); Knoepfler 1997: 36–37 dates the *Erôtideia kai Rhômaia* to 85 BCE. Manieri 2009: 342 likewise argues for a date after the Mithridatic Wars.

43 *IG* II^2 1054 l. 14 and l. 20. Cf. van Nijf and van Dijk 2020: 118.

44 For a longer version of this argument, see van Nijf and van Dijk 2020.

in their hometown, this special group of spectators became instrumental in legitimizing the new status of Rome, too.

In sum, the above has shown that participants and spectators should be taken seriously as agents in the network of contests, and hence in anchoring more firmly the presence and position of Rome. They not only played their part in the acknowledgment and popularity of the contests, but also subscribed to, and disseminated, the new political order for which these contests stood. In this way they helped build solidarity with fellow Greeks, while simultaneously gaining large-scale support for the acknowledgement—and anchoring—of Rome's position on wider Greek soil.

4 Architecture and Statues

The physical setting of festivals also had an impact on the way these events were experienced. Theaters and stadiums are inward facing circles that provide the spectators with a sense of social cohesion and group identity.[45] In a basic form this is visible in the chanting and acts of violence of football hooligans in modern stadia. Yet the logic of the crowd has also been a factor in other contexts. By affording intervisibility, theaters are an excellent venue for displays of political loyalty, as people are more willing to submit to (new) social or political authorities if they see that others are willing to support these authorities too. It is therefore no coincidence that throughout history—and to this day—rulers, emperors, and modern dictators alike have considered circular forms the ideal setting for mass ceremonies and public events.

The notion of common knowledge informs our understanding of the impact of the theater on communal behavior during the Thespian festivals, too. Above we discussed the collective role of the *theôroi* in recognizing the new political order propagated by the Rome-oriented festivals. It is easy to imagine how the seating arrangement in such venues would have contributed to this. The embassies of the cities attending the Thespian festivals, seated as they were in demarcated areas, made it manifest that they subscribed to the new political order and, at the same time, were more likely to commit to this order when they saw that others did so too.[46]

A Thespian decree in honor of Sulla's commander Quintus Bruttius Sura further illustrates the impact of the theatrical setting on the interaction between

45 For a discussion of the role of inward-facing circles in the creation of common knowledge, see Chwe 2001: 5. See also Taylor 2021: 149–152 for the impact of the ancient theater.

46 Van Nijf and van Dijk 2020: 108 and van Nijf 2020: 251–253.

the city and Rome.[47] The decree specifies that Sura was to be invited to a seat of honor (*proedria*) and that the *agônothetai* were to announce the honors for Sura in the theater during future editions of the *Erôtideia* and *Mouseia*. This invitation was also extended to Sura's descendants, which may indicate that the city expected a long patronage relationship with his family in return.

The decree for Sura shows that the relationship between Thespiae and its new Roman benefactor also found another material anchor in the shape of an honorific statue that was to be set up in the *epiphanestatos topos*—the 'most conspicuous location' of the city.[48] This brings us to a second example of material 'agency' in anchoring Roman hegemony: the role of statues. From the later Hellenistic period onwards internal and external political changes had found expression in an explosive growth in the numbers of statues set up for kings, emperors, and dignitaries as well as for local magistrates and benefactors and their families. Statues played an important role in the political culture of the later Greek city, expressing ideas about government and political preference.[49]

The inscription for Sura is unfortunately too fragmentary to tell us exactly where this prominent location was, yet literary and archaeological sources indicate that the number of statues in the city and the sanctuary must have been very large.[50] Pausanias describes the many statues that were set up for the Muses and other deities in the valley. He also mentions statues representing humans including that of Hesiod, of winners in the contests, and of Hellenistic royals.[51] Pausanias only has little to say on the later statues erected for the Romans, but the archaeological and epigraphical record shows that the traditional landscape of statues provided the Thespians with excellent opportunities to visually anchor the pro-Roman orientation that was so strongly embedded in their festivals. Apart from Sura, many important Romans received honorific statues. After the Mithridatic Wars, the *dêmos* of Thespiae also dedicated a statue of the Roman general Sulla to the Muses, thanking him for his benevolence to the city, and placed it somewhere in the valley.[52] The dedication in honor of Sulla was soon followed by other dedications, including

47 *IThesp.* 34.

48 See Oliver 2007 for Hellenistic Athens; van Nijf 2011 on Termessos; Ma 2013: 68–69 on the 'most conspicuous places' such as the agora (pp. 76–79), gymnasium (85–90), theaters (90–94), and sanctuaries (79–85 and 94–98).

49 For the political impact of statues, see van Nijf 2011 and 2015.

50 On the high number of statues in the city, see Paus. 9.26.7–8; 9.27.5; and in the sanctuary of the Muses, see Paus. 9.29.5–6; 9.30.1–4; 9.31.1–3. Cf. Robinson 2012: 233–242. For dedications to the Muses, Hurst 1996. For the archaeological remains of sculptures, see de Ridder 1922: 222–287.

51 The images for the Muses in Paus.9.30.1; tripods, Paus. 9.31.3; Hellenistic rulers, Paus. 9.31.1.

52 *IThesp.* 397. On the findspot, see Plassart 1926: 437 no. 73. See below Section 5.

the one for Titus Statilius Taurus and his family, mentioned above, as well as the wife and mother of the quaestor Marcus Junius Silanus.[53] Caesar also received a statue.[54] This process culminated in the early imperial period. Almost immediately after Augustus came to power, a statue in his honor was dedicated to the Muses.[55] Not much later, an impressive bronze statuary group was set up for Augustus' close friend and collaborator Agrippa, and his relatives.[56] Perhaps even more striking is that around the same time new splendor was given to an older statuary group of the nine muses.[57] The existing bases supporting the statues of the muses were engraved with ekphrastic epigrams by the Corinthian poet Honestus.[58] Interestingly, the names of the Muses were inscribed in Boeotian script, so as to give them a more traditional appearance.[59] Moreover, the entire sculpture group may have been moved so as to be exhibited together with a statue representing a female member of Augustus' family.[60] At any rate, a statue base of about the same size as those belonging to the Muses was likely set up around the same time and possibly near this sculpture group, with a prize-winning epigram by Honestus representing an Augusta as one of the Muses carved on its base.[61]

Thus, we see that material culture, both in terms of architectural structures and in the form of statues, gave the Thespians an opportunity to deal with the institutional change brought about by the Roman presence, while at the same time it could impact their willingness to accept these institutional changes. During the celebration of the festivals, when many people gathered in the valley, the city and its theaters, this effect was evidently amplified and ultimately incorporated and materialized within the city's sacred and civic landscape.[62]

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53 Titus Statilius Taurus: *IThesp.* 412. Marcus Junius Silanus and relatives: *IThesp.* 400, 401, 401*bis*.

54 *IThesp.* 420.

55 *IThesp.* 421.

56 *IThesp.* 422–423.

57 *IThesp.* 288. On this statue group and its epigrams see Jamot 1902b and Peek 1953. The most recent and updated interpretation of the monument can be found in Biard et al. 2017.

58 *IThesp.* 289–298. For Honestus' epigrams to the Muses, see Jones 2004; Höschele 2014.

59 Biard et al. 2017, 39.

60 The exact location of the monument can no longer be determined with certainty, but letters carved on the base suggest that the monument was taken apart and reassembled, perhaps at the same time that the poems were engraved; see Biard et al. 2017. For suggestions about which family member was represented, see Höschele 2014: 190–191, with further references.

61 *IThesp.* 424.

62 Cf. Spawforth 2012 for the deliberate transformation of Roman Greece into a 'museum', as a response of the Greek elites to the cultural politics of imperial Rome.

5 The Famous Statue of Eros

Against this background it is worth paying attention to the developments surrounding one particular statue, as this image—almost single-handedly—seems to have played a central role in the interactions of Thespiae with the outside world, and with Rome in particular. This statue was the famous Eros made by the Athenian sculptor Praxiteles in the fourth century BCE.[63] We saw above that Thespiae and the valley housed many works of art, but this image of Eros appears to have been the *pièce de résistance*. Its exceptional appeal can be deduced from the works of several ancient authors who claim that by the Roman period this statue had become one of the main reasons for visiting Thespiae. Strabo mentions that people would go up to Thespiae, 'a city otherwise not worth seeing', to see the Eros, and Cicero claims that the image was the prime reason that people visited the place, there being no other reason to go there.[64] Why did the statue occupy such a central position? And how had it come to play this role in the relationship between Thespiae, its contests, and Rome?

Part of the explanation for the centrality of the statue may be found in the important role that the cult of Eros played in the identity formation of the city and its contests.[65] How far the cult of Eros in Thespiae actually goes back in time is difficult to determine, but stories about the statue suggest that it held a certain sway over the city.

Pausanias tells us that besides the Muses Eros had long been venerated in Thespiae, as testified by 'a very ancient image of him, an unwrought stone'.[66] However, it has been argued that the establishment of Eros' cult only really took shape when the new statue by Praxiteles was dedicated.[67] The poet Leonidas of Tarentum (*AP* 16.206 = 89 HE) claims that the Thespians 'only venerated as a god the Eros (statue) made by Praxiteles'. This refers to a well-known aetiological myth connected with the statue. Athenaeus tells us that the *hetaira* Phryne had modeled for Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite. In exchange she received the statue of Eros, which she then dedicated in her hometown Thespiae.[68] The question whether or not Phryne's dedication led

63 Paus. 1.20.1.

64 Str. 9.2.25; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.4.

65 Schachter 1994: 216–219.

66 Paus. 9.27.1, tr. Jones; Gutzwiller 2004: 386.

67 Paus. 9.20.1–2. Schachter 1994: 217; a suggestion followed by Breitenberger 2004: 143; Manieri 2009: 341. A parallel for the statue's role as a catalyst for cult may be found in the Aphrodite of Knidos, a famous statue also made by Praxiteles; see Paul 2013: 251.

68 Ath. 13.591b. For a different and more elaborate version, Paus. 1.20.1–2.

to the establishment of Eros' cult, or merely added luster to it, is not the most relevant here. What is more important is that the stories which the statue generated, together with the notion that it still enjoyed much popularity well into Roman times, testify to the evident importance of the relationship between city and image.

More directly relevant for our argument is the suggestion that the statue played a role in the establishment and success of the *Erôtideia Rhômaia*. Denis Knoepfler has suggested that the image was taken to Athens in the second century BCE, presumably by the Roman general Lucius Mummius.[69] He proposes that Sulla returned the statue to the Thespians as a reward for their loyalty during the Mithridatic Wars. To celebrate its return, and to strengthen the good ties with Rome, the city would then have instituted the *Erôtideia Rhômaia*, or reorganized existing games as the *Erôtideia Rhômaia*.[70] On this view the return of the statue was a decisive factor in the establishment of the contests and in forging links between the city, its festivals, and Rome. Attractive though this scenario might be, it runs into the difficulty that Cicero explicitly states that Mummius had left the statue untouched.[71] But even if the image never left the city, it may still have played a formative role in the relationship between Sulla and Thespiae.

It is well-known that in his dealings with the Greek world Sulla laid claim to Aphrodite's favor by using the name *Epaphroditos*. Greek elites adopted this term in their dealings with the dictator.[72] The fact that Thespiae housed a famous cult statue of Eros, the son of Aphrodite, may have been a factor in establishing close relations between Sulla and the city, whether Sulla had returned the statue or not. The Thespians may have wanted to capitalize on the presence of the statue to attract Sulla's favor—or Sulla may himself have been drawn to the city because of it. Either way, the Eros statue may be said to have had some diplomatic impact.

If we return to the work of Pausanias, we get the impression that in the imperial period the statue continued to play an active role in the interactions between Thespiae and Rome. Pausanias shows that the statue became a pawn in the diplomatic games between the two cities. Having emphasized the importance of the statue for Thespian identity, Pausanias points out that the statue caught the attention of the Roman emperors, spurring them into

69 Str. 9.2.25. Knoepfler 1997: 29–30. For a different view, Gutzwiller 2004.

70 Knoepfler 1997: 35; dating followed by Manieri 2009; Grigsby 2017; van Nijf and van Dijk 2020.

71 Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.2.

72 Plu. *Sull.* 34.4. Examples listed by Santangelo 2007: 199–213.

action: 'The first to remove the image of Eros, it is said, was Gaius the Roman Emperor; Claudius, they say, sent it back to Thespiae, but Nero carried it away a second time. At Rome the image perished by fire'.[73] Blending the god with his statue, Pausanias even implies that the statue actually was responsible for the terrible fate that awaited the looting emperors, for he mentions that they were punished for their crimes against Eros: 'Of the pair who sinned against the god, Gaius was killed by a private soldier [...] The other, Nero, in addition to his violence to his mother, committed accursed and hateful crimes against his wedded wives'.[74] Pausanias is not the only author who attributes such a role to images—and hence to the gods. The Roman historian Suetonius makes a similar claim regarding the alleged order of emperor Caligula to ship the famous statue of Zeus from Olympia to Rome: 'His [emperor Caligula's] approaching murder was foretold by many prodigies. The statue of Jupiter at Olympia, which he had ordered to be taken to pieces and moved to Rome, suddenly uttered such a peal of laughter that the scaffoldings collapsed and the workmen took to their heels'.[75] While we may not want to go as far as Pausanias and other authors in suggesting that the god played a role in this process—it does seem reasonable to state that emperors and others may have considered statues to have some form of agency, affecting human behavior.

In any case, the removal of the statue must have caused the Thespians considerable grief, and it seems that they continued to display the original statue base at the principal site of the contests.[76] Still, this may not have been enough: for the disappearance of the statue apparently motivated the Thespians to replace it with a copy, presumably to ensure its lasting attraction to foreign visitors. At any rate, the statue that Pausanias saw was no longer the original, for he mentions: 'The modern Eros at Thespiae was made by the Athenian Menodorus, who copied the work of Praxiteles'.[77] Archaeologists disagree about the precise nature of this copy, but whatever it may have looked like, it must have done the trick.[78]

An epigram from the Flavian period signed by Herennia Procula, a member of a wealthy Roman family resident at Thessalonica, was composed for the copy. It reads: 'This Eros teaches desire. Aphrodite herself said, "Where

73 Paus. 9.27.3–4, tr. Jones.
74 Paus. 9.27.4. On the statue of Eros and the fate of those who took loot, see also Miles 2008: 254–255.
75 Suet. *Cal.* 57.1, tr. Rolfe.
76 Gutzwiller 400.
77 Paus. 9.27.4.
78 Gutzwiller 2004: 387.

did Praxiteles see you with me?"[79] The formulation by Herennia Procula ascribes further agency to the copy, for it is the statue that teaches desire. Kathryn Gutzwiller suggests that the 'erotic atmosphere' created by the statue had further consequences. A passage in Plutarch's *Amatorius* (749b), which must date immediately after the replacement of the statue, shows Plutarch bringing his newly-wed wife to a celebration of the *Erôtideia* to make prayers and sacrifices to the statue for the success of their marriage. This is another illustration of the power the Eros statue was considered to have in Boeotian society. It makes clear why the Thespians wanted to replace the statue, underlining its importance to the city and its reputation until the city's disappearance in late antiquity.

Regardless, then, of the exact influence that the statue of Eros may have had in the establishment of the *Erôtideia Rhômaia*, it is clear that the statue had an impact on the human interactions that underpinned the relationship between Thespiae, its contests, and Rome, as well as in anchoring the (political) changes that these interactions brought about.

6 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to gain a better understanding of how traditional festival culture was an anchor in the process of intercultural communication between Greek cities and the new hegemonic position of Rome. We have focused on the issue of agency in this process, and selected the new—yet traditionally styled—Thespian festivals celebrated in honor of Rome as our case-study. We have seen that different agents played their own role in anchoring the presence of Rome: festival organizers, such as Polycratides and other members of his family, used the pre-existing festival infrastructure to create links with the Italian community and to anchor Roman presence in traditional practice. Simultaneously, they secured their own local status and position under these new circumstances while doing so. The participants and spectators, furthermore, played an important role in conveying solidarity with Rome on a larger scale. Their involvement not only gave a permanent expression to the message of solidarity among Greek cities, but also provided a conduit of support for the position of Rome. Finally, objects and architecture had their impact on this process as well, and played their part in anchoring the changes that these interactions brought about. In this chapter, we have argued that it is important to go beyond merely locating agency: while all agents played their

79 *IThesp.* 271. Translation and comment in Gutzwiller 2004: 384.

own role in this complex process of social, political, and cultural exchange, we have also seen how their agencies interacted and were evidently related and intertwined. Hence we may conclude that only by taking into account the different agents and their roles in relation to each other, including the impact of objects and their affordances, can we begin to understand processes of anchoring and change.

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CHAPTER 4

Callimachus vs. Conon: Competing Agents of Change for the Lock of Berenice

Brett Evans

1 Introduction

The heavens shone slightly brighter one morning in 245 BCE, when a little lock of a queen's hair ascended to the stars as a new constellation observed ever since, the *Coma Berenices* ('Lock of Berenice'). In January 246 Ptolemy III had acceded to the throne of Egypt. Shortly thereafter he married his cousin, Berenice II, subsequently re-styled as his sister, the daughter of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II.[1] That autumn Ptolemy quit Alexandria to fight the Third Syrian War, and Berenice promised to dedicate a lock of hair to the gods in exchange for his safe homecoming.[2] Ptolemy seems to have returned by summer 245, at which time Berenice fulfilled her vow in her 'mother' Arsinoe's temple at Cape Zephyrion, where the former queen was worshipped as Aphrodite.[3] Then, the unexpected happened: the lock vanished, and history began to be made. The astronomer Conon of Samos claimed to have 'discovered' the lock in the sky as a new constellation; and the poet Callimachus, a long-standing member of the Ptolemaic court, celebrated the catasterism in an elegy now known

1 Van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 30–31 discusses the difficulties in dating the royal wedding, ultimately favoring Catullus' testimony, rendering a now-lost portion of Callimachus' *Coma Berenices*, to the effect that Ptolemy and Berenice were wedded soon before Ptolemy's departure (Catul. 66.11–12). For the political and ideological motivations underpinning Berenice's feigned Ptolemaic genealogy see van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 36–38.

2 That the dedication was made after Ptolemy's return is attested by Catul. 66.9–12, 33–38 and implied by Ps. Hyg. 2.24.1.

3 For Ptolemy's return by Summer 245 BCE, see van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 76. Astronomical evidence seemingly corroborates this date: van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 82–84 demonstrates that the constellations mentioned by Catullus-Callimachus were best visible in May 245 BCE. Others have dated the catasterism to the constellation's heliacal rising in September 246 BCE (West 1985) or 245 BCE (Cameron 1995: 107; Koenen 1993: 90), but the constellation was scarcely visible in Alexandria at these times (van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 82); moreover, the former date problematically places Berenice's dedication around the time of Ptolemy's departure, while the latter is significantly later than his evident return.

as the *Coma Berenices* (fr. 110 Harder), which he set as the final poem of his four-book *Aetia*.

Far from ephemeral, Berenice's Lock proved wildly popular: portrait coins emphasizing her famous curl proliferated, many of them bedazzled with stars;[4] Jean-Yves Carrez-Maratray has identified a mid-third-century mold of a nude woman sacrificing to a goddess' statue as Berenice offering her hair to Arsinoe-Aphrodite-Zephyritis.[5] Clearly the Lock passed the 'tipping point',[6] traversing the *oikoumenê* to secure its place as a constellation and story still remembered today. Its success is all the more surprising considering that never before—or again—was an historical individual made into a constellation,[7] and certainly not while still alive. By effecting Berenice's deification *pars pro toto*, the catasterism marked another advance in the Ptolemies' already-innovative ruler cult.[8]

This chapter examines the social factors driving the agents of change responsible for this singular religious, political, and scientific innovation. Historical evidence surrounding the Lock's catasterism is scanty, and modern scholars have therefore had to resort to hypothesis. *Communis opinio* holds that members of the court, including Conon and Callimachus, collaborated to orchestrate Lock's catasterism. I argue that this explanation fails to account for the more fundamental pressure that members of the court society, including Conon and Callimachus, faced constantly to prove their worth and hence compete for status at court. I propose instead that the Lock's successful innovation is owed more to the cumulative contributions of competitors rather than collaborators, and that Callimachus positions his *Coma Berenices* as a gift even more valuable to his patrons than Conon's constellation.

2 How a Star Was Born

First, let us examine what little evidence survives concerning this iconic innovation. Anything Conon may have written about the Lock is lost; no fragments

4 See Clayman 2014a: 101–102; van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 29, 45 with Plate 3.3 = CNG no. 83 (Triton XIII), lot 1361, ca. 246–204 BCE; 47 with Plate 3.4(c) = NNC inv. GR-08771, ca. 246–222 BCE.

5 Hildesheim inv. 1128, mid-third-century BCE: see Carrez-Maratray 2008: 105–114; Clayman 2014a: 101–102.

6 Gladwell 2000.

7 Emphasized by Hauben 2011: 359–360; van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 72.

8 So van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 104–109, as opposed to earlier views that the catasterism merely anticipated Berenice's deification (see Koenen 1993: 89–90). For Ptolemaic ruler cult see e.g. Pfeiffer 2008.

of his oeuvre remain.[9] We are fortunate to possess substantial portions of Callimachus' *Coma Berenices*, yet this elegy, spoken miraculously by the Lock itself, recounts not the true story of its discovery, but the fantastic tale of its divine abduction and subsequent transformation into a new constellation by Arsinoe-Aphrodite-Zephyritis.

It is only later sources that fill out the narrative of the Lock's discovery. In all of them Conon plays the starring role, designating the new constellation to seek royal favor at the Ptolemaic court. This story first appears in pseudo-Hyginus' *De Astronomia* in the first or second century CE. After he identifies the stars which 'the astronomer Conon and Callimachus say' (*Conon mathematicus et Callimachus dicit*, 2.24.1) are Berenice's Lock, pseudo-Hyginus recounts what happened after the Lock's unexpected disappearance: 'and when the king bore this deed badly, Conon the astronomer, as I said before, desiring to enter the king's favor, said that the lock was seen among the stars' (*quod factum cum rex aegre ferret, Conon mathematicus ut ante diximus cupiens inire gratiam regis, dixit crinem inter sidera videri*) (*De Astronomia* 2.24.1). This story appears in condensed form in the Aratean scholia, repeating the detail that Conon designated the new constellation Πτολεμαίῳ χαριζόμενος ('gratifying Ptolemy', Σ Aratus 137; 146).[10] The sixth-century-CE mythological commentary of pseudo-Nonnus on Gregory of Nazianzus (*Commentaries* 5.1) offers a similar narrative to pseudo-Hyginus', except it names Berenice, not Ptolemy, as the patron Conon sought to please: he made the constellation 'to flatter her' (πρὸς κολακείαν αὐτῆς).

The coherence of these narratives suggests that they draw on a common source beyond Callimachus' poem, for Callimachus says nothing about Ptolemy's anger at the Lock's disappearance or Conon's courtly aspirations.[11] One possibility is the lost original of the *Catasterismi* by Eratosthenes of Cyrene, Callimachus' younger contemporary and head of the Alexandrian Library.[12] It is impossible, however, to verify this hypothesis, as the work's extant *Epitome* from the first century CE mentions the Coma without any narrative of its

9 On Conon's lost texts see Rehm 1922 (= *RE* 11.2.1339–1340).

10 For the text see Martin 1974.

11 So West 1985: 62 n.7; *pace* van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 75–76.

12 Three arguments might be adduced to support this hypothesis. (1) Dietze 1894: 24–25 argued that the *Catasterismi* was the source of Hyg. *Astr.* 2.24; Martin 1956: 63–126 argues that pseudo-Hyginus is entirely based on Eratosthenes' text. (2) The relevant narrative in Σ Arat. 137 is transmitted by *Vat.* 1087, which Kidd 1997: 44 argues preserves material similar to the so-called Φ edition of Aratus, notable for its heavy use of Eratosthenes. On Φ see Martin 1956: 35–126; Dickey 2007: 58. (3) Pseudo-Nonnus seems to have relied on the Aratean scholia, as argued by Rehm 1899: 264 n. 3, and thus may ultimately rely on Eratosthenes' account: so Massimilla 2010: 466.

discovery (*Catasterismi* 12);[13] moreover, the *Epitome* elsewhere identifies the Lock not as Berenice's but Ariadne's (*Catasterismi* 5), suggesting either an error in the *Catasterismi*'s transmission or, as others have argued, a politically motivated re-attribution of the Coma to Ariadne after Berenice was murdered by her son, Ptolemy IV, in 221 BCE.[14] Another possible source for the discovery narrative is a lost commentary on Callimachus' elegy which the Milan *Diegesis* later excerpted.[15] Whatever the source may be, it appears likely that the tradition of Conon acting alone to win a patron's favor originated early, perhaps already in the Hellenistic period.

Although some modern scholars accept this tradition,[16] most have discredited it, finding it implausible that an event of such ideological import for the new regents sprang from the mind of a lone astronomer. Instead, it is held more likely that the entire charade was premeditated and executed by the court in unison.[17] Kathryn Gutzwiller has made the most influential statement of this position:

> In order to draw attention to the queen's sacrifice and so to increase its value as propaganda, the court (at least so one may assume) decided upon the ploy of the lock's disappearance and claim of divine intervention. Conon's part in this hoax was simply to find a suitable place for the lock in the sky .... Callimachus had the more difficult task of fleshing out the myth in an appealing literary form. (Gutzwiller 1992: 372–373)

Skeptical though we may be that the Lock's disappearance was unintended by its royal dedicator, we must remember that accidents do happen, and there is

13 Ps. Hyg. 2.24.2 does, however, attribute to Eratosthenes the additional story that Berenice paid the dowries for impoverished Lesbian maidens, on which see Marinone 1990. Pàmias I Massana and Zucker 2013: 189–190 suggest that Eratosthenes therefore offered a second identification of the Coma with the constellation of Lesbian maidens named at Σ Germ. *Arat.* p. 72. l. 19.

14 So already Boll 1903: 275–276. Geus 2002: 221–222 concludes from the Coma's attribution to Ariadne that Eratosthenes must have written after Berenice's murder, but he does not explain the *Epitome*'s attribution of the Lock to Berenice at *Catasterismi* 12. Pàmias I Massana and Zucker 2013: 189 more persuasively suggest that the attribution to Ariadne was secondary.

15 Pfeiffer 1949: 123 ad *Dieg.* 5.40; Massimilla 2010: 154–155; 466.

16 So recently Carrez-Maratray 2008: 101; Berrey 2017: 1–3.

17 See already Foscolo 1803: 38–39; more recently West 1985: 63 with n. 14; 66; Gutzwiller 1992: 362–363; Koenen 1993: 90. Similarly Llewellyn-Jones and Winder 2011 propose that Berenice herself arranged the entire affair and devised the ideology of queenship they identify in Callimachus' poem.

no evidence to prove the hunch that 'the court' pulled the strings in a supposed vanishing act. What is more, several terms of this hypothesis merit scrutiny, the first being 'propaganda', by which we are left to understand the constellation and Callimachus' *Coma* as vehicles of misinformation propagated by the crown to manipulate mass belief.[18] Gregor Weber has debunked this conception of Hellenistic court poetry: the term 'propaganda' not only reduces complex, humorous, and even at times ironic poems like the *Coma* to blunt instruments of straightforward ideology, but also implies that court intellectuals were subservient members of a collaborative ministry of culture.[19] Instead, rulers brought scholars and artists to their courts to satisfy—or affect—their own cultural distinction, and the sheer range of intellectual outputs from the courts suggests that scholars enjoyed a measure of independence.[20] This is not to say that scholars took no cues from the top: surely a successful career at court depended on satisfying a patron's tastes. But this bottom-up view of cultural production at court differs vastly from the top-down model implied by 'propaganda'.[21]

More recent accounts of the Lock's genesis ascribe greater initiative to individuals at court rather than 'the court' itself. Branko van Oppen de Ruiter, for example, argues that Berenice devised the Lock's catasterism together with Conon and Callimachus, and he suggests that she organized a public celebration where the two men presented their joint discovery.[22] Thus collaboration at court continues to be assumed as the constellation's *sine qua non*. But if intellectuals were not compelled to do as 'the court' or a patron said, what motivated this supposed collaboration?

In fact, as Hellenistic historians have turned increased attention to the court society's social dynamics, what has come to light is an intense and ever-present competition. The court's upper echelon comprised the *philoi tou basileôs* ('friends of the king'), the technical term for 'courtiers'.[23] The status of each *philos* was precarious, dependent on the continual favor of the ruler—a notoriously changeable quantity.[24] The courts' social hierarchies were eminently

18 See Weber and Zimmerman 2003: 11–12 on 'propaganda' as applied to antiquity.

19 Weber 1993: 8–17, 415; 1998–1999: 149; 2011: 125–130. His arguments against 'propaganda' are echoed by e.g. Selden 1998: 405–412; Carrez-Maratray 2008: 101–105; Strootman 2010: 34–35; Clayman 2014: 10–11; Pfeiffer 2016.

20 Weber 1998–1999: 149.

21 I discuss a mechanism of this 'bottom-up' model of cultural production in Section 4.

22 Van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 112, 115.

23 On royal *philoi* see Strootman 2014: 117–135.

24 See e.g. Plb. 5.26.13, comparing courtiers to pebbles on the king's abacus, ever changing in value according to his will.

flexible in the third century before the aulic reforms that produced the explicit rankings of court titles. There thus reigned at court an endemic strife between *philoi*, all of whom were striving to maintain—and gain—the king's favor and perks that went with it, including wealth, status, and power.[25]

Poets and scientists were fully enmeshed in the court's agonistic environment. Some are explicitly titled *philoi* in ancient sources, such as the famous engineer Archimedes;[26] many more present themselves as *philoi* in their works.[27] Like other *philoi*, intellectuals had to compete for status. In Alexandria the Ptolemies personally appointed the members of their prestigious Museum (Strabo 17.8),[28] and competition did not end upon admission; Timon of Phlius famously satirizes the Museum scholars as birds fighting each other for meals served by the king (*SH* 786).[29] This strife is amply reflected in Hellenistic court poetry: consider only Callimachus' attack on his rival Telchines in the *Aetia* prologue (fr. 1 Harder). Literary polemics were social weapons which poets used to distinguish themselves in the all-important field of court.[30] Nor did poets jockey for status only against poets: Callimachus' first *Iambus* depicts quarreling amongst the Museum scholars writ large, as evidenced by the reference to οἱ φιλόλογοι in the Milan *Diegesis* (6.3).

Let us return to the hypothesis that Conon and Callimachus collaborated in discovering and elaborating the story of Berenice's Lock. Surely it is plausible that the two men talked, shared knowledge, or otherwise collaborated: they moved in the same social field and possessed complementary expertise. Yet, even if we assume that they collaborated, this supposed partnership does not mean that they stopped being competitors for the court society's most valuable currency, that is, royal favor. Competitors regularly collaborate: today's business world calls such cooperation 'coopetition'. What motivates each party, however, is their own self-interest; nothing stops 'co-opetitors' from striving to come out on top.[31] I thus suggest that, even if we assume that Conon and Callimachus collaborated, we must still examine the workings of their individual drive to prove their worth as a member of a 'team of rivals'.

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25 See especially Herman 1997; Strootman 2014: 150–159.

26 Archimedes is called a *philos* of Hieron II at Plu. *Marc.* 14.7. Others include the New Comic poet Philippides, called Λυσιμάχου φίλος ('friend of Lysimachus', Plu. *Demetr.* 12.5) and the poet Hegesianax, named a *philos* of Antiochus III (Ath. 4.155b).

27 On intellectuals' self-presentation as *philoi* see especially Berrey 2017: 89–125.

28 On the Museum and its Library see Fraser 1972: 1.305–335.

29 See Cameron 1995: 31–32.

30 See e.g. Asper 2001; Stephens 2005; Klooster 2011: 115–145.

31 Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1996 popularized the term; for a recent literature review see Gnyawali and Charleton 2018.

At the same time, it does not seem to me necessary to assume that Callimachus and Conon collaborated at all. What prohibits us from assuming that Callimachus, having learned of Conon's clever idea, celebrated it and created a story for it all on his own? Jackie Murray, for example, has recently argued that Apollonius' *Argonautica* boasts a highly accurate and internally consistent skyscape which seemingly aligns with the night sky as it appeared on Ptolemy III's birthday and jubilee in 238 BCE.[32] Murray does not posit, though, that Apollonius needed an astronomer; she argues that Apollonius made use of the latest astronomical charts, treatises, and perhaps even a newly-invented planetarium.[33] If such astronomical resources were available to Apollonius, I see no reason why Callimachus might not have employed them as well and composed the *Coma Berenices* independently from Conon.

3 Competition as an Engine of Innovation

Whether Callimachus and Conon worked together or not, then, they were competitors in the social field of court, and it was this competition which I argue fueled their actions that resulted in the Lock's successful innovation. At this juncture, I would like to clarify how I use the term 'competition'. Recent scholarship on the Hellenistic court society has tended to highlight courtiers' winner-take-all struggles for favor of the kind mentioned above.[34] Callimachus' attitude towards Conon is not at all like this fierce feuding: what social utility would there be in denigrating the astronomer who had offered this most spectacular gift? The competitive spirit I see between Callimachus and Conon has a much friendlier face.

Here I find useful the distinction made by the sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918) between 'conflict' (*Kampf*) and 'competition' (*Konkurrenz*),[35] which has now been profitably applied to the social dynamics of the Roman imperial court.[36] Whereas Simmel's 'conflict' is a direct fight between two individuals for a prize held by the opponent, 'competition' is an indirect form of fighting between individuals seeking a prize held by a third party, like runners in a race. To an outside observer the runners do not appear to be fighting, as each is only striving to run the fastest; yet only one will win the prize. Unlike

32 Murray 2014.
33 Murray 2014: 260.
34 Herman 1997 is especially notable.
35 Simmel 1903.
36 See the essays in Choda et al. 2020.

conflict which results in a net loss of value, Simmelian competition adds value to society, which benefits from the competitors' cumulative efforts.

Simmel's sociology of competition echoes the archaic poet Hesiod's canonical distinction between bad and good Strife (*Eris*) in the *Works and Days*. Bad *Eris* spurs men on to destroy each other in war and violent contests (*Op.* 13–16); good *Eris* is a social boon (17–26). When a man sees his neighbor getting wealthier than he is, he strives to enrich himself; and 'potter vies with potter and builder with builder, and beggar envies beggar and poet envies poet' (25–26). This archaic view of good *Eris* persisted in the Hellenistic period, as honorary inscriptions for the benefactors of cities and associations attest: witness the formulaic expressions stating that these groups grant their benefactors honors ὅπως ἂν οὖν **ἐφάμιλλον** εἶ τοῖς βουλομένοις εὐεργετεῖν τὸ κοινόν ('so, then, that there be a **rivalry** between those intending to be benefactors to the association', *IG* II^2 1297.6–8) *vel sim.*[37] Hellenistic courtiers regularly engaged in such competitions of beneficence. As *philoi tou basileôs*, courtiers were bound to the king in *philia* ('friendship'), a long-term relationship which consisted of the reciprocal exchange of gifts.[38] The court's social gatherings thus staged Simmelian competitions in gift-giving, in which *philoi* strove to outdo each other by giving their king the most pleasing gift of all, winning his greatest favors in return.[39]

Callimachus sketches the social dynamics of such gift-giving competitions in the twelfth *Iambus* (fr. 202 Pf.). Celebrating the birth of a friend's daughter, Callimachus here recounts a contest among the Olympians to give the most beautiful gift to Zeus' newborn girl Hebe (cf. fr. 202.24–25 τίς πᾳ̣ι . [. καλ]λ̣ίστῃ δ̣ῴσει / π . [. .] . α τιμήσει, 'who will honor the child with the most beautiful gift?'). Callimachus, echoing both Hesiod's 'good Eris' and the inscriptional formulae cited above, calls the competition 'sweet strife': οἱ δ' ι. [. . γ]λυκεῖαν ἀλλήλοις ἔριν / [θ]έντες ἠμ[ι]λλῶντο δω[τί]νη[ς πέρι] ('And they made **sweet strife** with one another and **were vying** [in the matter of] the gift', 45–46). Apollo wins, of course, with his gift of song; what interests me here is his speech (54–74) comparing his gift's value to that of the gifts of others. He first devalues Hephaestus' gifts of gold by pointing out (in good Hesiodic fashion) that the

37 For honorary decrees from cities see e.g. *Agora* XVI 120.4–7; *IG* II^2 558.11–14; 663.30–31; *Agora* XVI 185.17. For associations see *IG* II^2 1297 (= *GRA* 24) 6–8; similarly *IG* II^2 1301 (= *GRA* 25) 8–9; *IG* II^2 1324 (= *GRA* 32) 20–24; *IG* II^2 1327 (= *GRA* 35) 20–21; *IG* II^2 1329 (= *GRA* 37) 19–20; *IG* II^2 1292 (= *GRA* 26) 18–20.

38 On Hellenistic royal *philia* and gift-exchange see especially Herman 1987: 155–156, 164; Strootman 2014: 152–159.

39 An exemplary case is Josephus *AJ* 12.215–217, a courtiers' competition to give the greatest sums to the king upon the birth of Ptolemy V's son.

metal acts as an incitement to injustice (56–64).[40] If this does not seem exactly sweet, his treatment of Athena's expertly-carved toys is far more charitable:

> τὴν Ἀθηναίης δὲ καὶ ἑτέρων δόσιν,
> καίπερ εὖ σμίλῃσιν ἠκριβωμένην,
> ὁ πρόσω φοιτέων ἀμαυρώσει χρ[ό]νος. (fr. 202.65–67)[41]
>
> The gift of Athena and the others,
> although fashioned exactingly with knives,
> time as it passes will make dim.

Sweet though Apollo's praise may be, it has a competitive edge nonetheless: baubles may please for a time, but poems are forever.

Recently Ivana Petrovic has interpreted *Iambus* 12's competition in gift-giving as an analogy for Hellenistic courtiers' attempts to offer their 'friend', the king, the most pleasing gift. She argues that this 'sweet strife' among all the king's men resulted in the proliferation of gifts we observe, for example, to the new goddess Arsinoe-Aphrodite whose shrine the Ptolemies' admiral Callicrates of Samos had founded at Cape Zephyrion.[42] Taking this argument one step further, I suggest that this competition for royal favor was responsible for the anchoring of new inventions like the goddess Arsinoe-Aphrodite-Zephyritis across many discourses and media, thereby resulting in successful innovation.[43] It is this competitive edge that I now wish to trace in the fragments of Callimachus' *Coma Berenices*.

4 Callimachus' Competition with Conon

The attitude which Callimachus displays toward Conon in his *Coma Berenices* is generally understood as one of praise: he not only adorns the astronomer's discovery with an elegy, but opens it with a complimentary catalogue of his scholarly researches (fr. 110.1, 7–8; cf. Catullus 66.1–10).[44] Yet, as *Iambus* 12

40 On Callimachus' treatment of gold see Acosta-Hughes 2002: 138–141.

41 See Kerkhecker 1999: 238 for the text; 243 for discussion of MSS.

42 Petrovic 2019: 298–301. On Callicrates' shrine see Bing 2003.

43 For the terms 'anchoring' and 'innovation' see Sluiter 2017.

44 This catalogue is discussed as Callimachus' praise for Conon by e.g. Koenen 1993: 113; Harder 2012: 2.801 ad fr.110.1–7; van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 77. Differently Gutzwiller 1992: 373 argues that Callimachus made the Lock his poem's speaker in order to distance himself from the court affair, for she assumes that Callimachus would not have wished

reminds us, praising the competition is a potent strategy to make oneself shine all the brighter.[45] It is in this way that I suggest Callimachus' praise of Conon operates.

Only three lines of Callimachus' Greek are extant, but they are most illuminating:

> πάντα τὸν ἐν γραμμαῖσιν ἰδὼν ὅρον ἥι τε φέρονται
> .....
> †η† με Κόνων ἔβλεψεν ἐν ἠέρι τὸν Βερενίκης
> βόστρυχον ὅν κείνη πᾶσιν ἔθηκε θεοῖς. (fr. 110.1, 7–8)
>
> Having seen the whole boundary (i.e. sky) among the lines, where are borne …
> Conon spotted me in the sky, Berenice's
> lock which she dedicated to all the gods.

The Lock's first words set us in the astronomer's observatory: γραμμαί is the technical term for 'lines' dividing the sky into regions and connecting stars on star charts,[46] and ὅρος makes an astronomical metaphor for the sky as the 'boundary' of human vision.[47] Yet Conon's γραμμαί are not the only ones to which Callimachus' Lock draws the reader's attention. The *Coma*, we will recall, stands as the last elegy of Callimachus' *Aetia*, and so when the reader imagines Conon 'having seen the whole boundary among the lines' (πάντα τὸν ἐν γραμμαῖσιν ἰδὼν ὅρον) his own, readerly gaze dovetails with the astronomer's: he, too, now looks upon 'the boundary among the lines', i.e. the 'end' of the *Aetia*. This metapoetic interpretation is invited by both γραμμαί and ὅρος. First, γραμμαί can refer not only to astronomical lines, but also lines forming letters (e.g. Plato *Protagoras* 326d); and its cognate γράμμα commonly denotes literary texts, as in Callimachus' *Epigram* 23 Pf. = 53 GP.[48] Second, ὅρος regularly

'appearing himself to accept the patently fallacious discovery'. Ferraro 2006 has criticized this view, in my opinion rightly. For Callimachus at the beginning of the *Victoria Berenices* has no qualms about calling Berenice 'holy blood of the Sibling Gods' (κα[σιγνή]των ἱερὸν αἷμα θεῶν, fr. 54.2 Harder), which she patently was not; on Callimachus' fictive genealogies for Berenice see Evans 2021: 104–105.

45 Cf. Klooster 2011: 172–173 on Hellenistic poets' use of praise to distinguish themselves.

46 Pfeiffer 1949: 112 ad fr. 110.1; Harder 2012: 2.801–802 ad loc.

47 Harder 2012: 2.802 ad loc., supporting Cassio 1973: 329–330 n. 1 that ὅρος is metaphorical, not technical as Pfeiffer 1949: 112 ad fr.110.1 argued. For the metaphor see Arist. *GC* 330b 32; *Mu.* 400a.7.

48 Πλάτωνος / ἓν τὸ περὶ ψυχῆς γράμμ' ἀναλεξάμενος ('having read one text of Plato concerning the soul', *Epigr.* 23.3–4 Pf.); further examples in LSJ s.v. 3.3.

denotes a 'boundary stone' marking the limit of a territory, and such stones were commonly inscribed. Considering Callimachus' pronounced interest in inscriptions in *Aetia* 3–4 (cf. 'The Tomb of Simonides', fr. 64 Harder; Acontius' tree-inscriptions, fr. 73 Harder) and the *Coma*'s own play with the conventions of dedicatory epigram,[49] ὅρος in combination with γραμμαῖσιν seems to point to the poem's placement as the *Aetia*'s epigrammatic *Schlussgedicht*.

Drawing on Regina Höschele's examination of how ancient collections of epigrams cast their readers in the role of passers-by of inscribed objects,[50] I suggest that the *Coma*'s opening participial phrase offers the reader a similar 'double vision'. Just as Conon poured over his star-charts and discovered the Lock in the sky (ὅρος), so now the reader, casting his gaze across the *Aetia*, discovers the *Coma* at its end (ὅρος). It is true that the naming of Conon at line 7 as the subject of the first line's participle ἰδών forecloses on a total identification of the reader with the astronomer. Yet the first line's tantalizing elision of the two—fleeting though it may be—still leads one to wonder: what might Callimachus mean by collapsing Conon's discovery of the Lock in the sky with the reader's discovery of the *Coma* at the *Aetia*'s end?

Translation and cultural displacement have already been recognized as significant themes in the *Coma Berenices*.[51] I would add that these opening lines mark out yet another translation, and one of the greatest self-interest to Callimachus. Berenice's Lock began its life as an idea in the astronomer's star-charts, from where it moved into the sky itself and now, thanks to Callimachus, into the collection of *Aetia* as well. In the course of this final translation, the Lock has gained a voice, the means by which it spreads the story of its discovery by the astronomer, original dedication by the queen, and divinization by Arsinoe-Aphrodite-Zephryitis. A competitive teleology starts to suggest itself: Conon discovered mute stars, but Callimachus gave them a voice, a history, a personality. He made them memorable. It is perhaps important to remember that the stars Conon found as Berenice's Lock are extremely dim: the brightest of them has an apparent magnitude of only 4.26, barely visible compared to the brightest star of its neighbor Leo at 1.35.[52] Callimachus endowed this faint constellation with a memorable voice that gave us directions and made us want to find them. And in terms of visibility, he does Conon one better: he sets the *Coma* as the *Aetia*'s crowning poem.[53]

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49 See Harder 1998: 98–99; 2012: 2.797.

50 Höschele 2007.

51 E.g. Selden 1998: 328; Höschele 2009.

52 I thank Ivana Petrovic for this suggestion.

53 An anonymous reader aptly reminds me of Leonidas' praise of Aratus for making the stars φαεινότερα ('more brilliant', *AP* 9.25.6 = GP 101.6) in his *Phaenomena*.

Callimachus continues to foreground the importance of his poetic gift to the Lock in part of the *Coma*'s largest extant fragment, lines 51–64. Here the Lock describes how Zephyrus bore it up to heaven, where Arsinoe-Aphrodite bathed it in the immortal waters and set it 'as a new constellation among the old' (fr. 110.64). This passage is a *tour de force* of strategies to anchor Berenice's Lock not in the sky alone, but in diverse literary and cultural traditions: Benjamin Acosta-Hughes, for example, has demonstrated that Callimachus writes Berenice into the literary tradition of Sappho's lyrics comparing erotically-powerful women to goddesses;[54] Thomas Nelson argues that Callimachus was setting Berenice's Lock in competition with a far more recent woman's hair, the Seleucid queen Stratonice's, which Lucian claims (*Pro Imaginibus* 5) was the subject of a poetic competition in praise.[55] Equally striking, however, is the web of allusions Callimachus makes here to earlier elegies in the *Aetia*, many of them concerning stars. I argue that Callimachus makes Arsinoe-Aphrodite's placement of the Lock as 'a [new] constellation among the old' a powerful analogy for his own placement of the Lock as the newest, final poem among the earlier *aitia*.

In fact, the Lock's very description of its celestial anchoring ([Κύπρι]ς̣ ἐν ἀρχαίοις ἄστρον [ἔθηκε νέον], '[Cypris] [set] me as a [new] constellation among the old', fr. 110.64) fittingly alludes to an earlier elegy, 'Acontius and Cydippe' from *Aetia* 3 (fr. 67–75e Harder). At the beginning of that poem, Callimachus introduces the youths as 'both beautiful **stars** of the islands' (καλοὶ νησάων **ἀστέρες** ἀμφότεροι, fr. 67.8). Near that elegy's end, Callimachus emphasizes their antiquity when praising the local historian who told their story, '**ancient** Xenomedes' (**ἀρχαίου** Ξενομήδεος, fr. 75.54). Already, then, it is becoming clear that 'old constellations' which the Lock joins are not only stars in the sky, but also in the *Aetia*.

Yet another allusion to 'Acontius and Cydippe' suggests Callimachus' intent in referring to this elegy in the scene of the Lock's catasterism: to underscore the value of his poetry in spreading the story—and worship—of Berenice's Lock. Nino Marinone notes the simplicity with which the Lock proclaims its beauty: ἀλλ̣[ὰ φαείνω] / [καὶ Βερ]ενίκειος καλὸς ἐγὼ πλόκαμ̣[ος] ('but that I, [too,] Berenice's beautiful Lock, [might shine]', fr. 110.61–62).[56] What makes this line so simple is the Lock's use of the formula of a καλός inscription, the common declaration that 'So-and-so is beautiful'. The *Aetia*'s reader may well recall that this formula appears in the emotionally charged inscriptional moment

54 Acosta-Hughes 2010: 63–75.

55 Nelson 2021.

56 Marinone 1984: 217 ad loc.

of 'Acontius and Cydippe', fr. 73 Harder. Acontius, lovesick for Cydippe, proclaims that he will inscribe her name and beauty onto all the trees of the forest: ἀλλ' ἐνὶ δὴ φλοιοῖσι κεκομμένα τόσσα φέροιτε / γράμματα, **Κυδίππην** ὅσσ' ἐρέουσι **καλήν** ('But may you bear as many letters carved into your bark as will say "**Cydippe is beautiful**"', fr. 73 Harder). Over the course of that elegy, we watch as Acontius' γράμματα beget further γράμματα: first Xenomedes recorded the youths' story in his prose work, of which Callimachus provides a detailed conspectus (fr. 75.53–76 Harder); then Callimachus himself re-tells their story, a process which he dramatizes at the elegy's end declaring that 'the child's [Acontius'] story ran to my Calliope' (ὁ παιδὸς / μῦθος ἐς ἡμετέρην ἔδραμε Καλλιόπην, fr. 75.76–77). Clayman has argued that Cydippe functions as an analogue for Berenice.[57] By analogy, then, Callimachus suggests his poetry's power to spread the fame of Berenice's beauty, fulfilling Acontius' wish. He makes good on this promise in the *Coma* when the Lock inscribes, as it were, its own beauty: [Βερ]ενίκειος καλὸς ἐγὼ πλόκαμ[ος] (fr. 110.62).

Cydippe is by no means the only 'old star' of the *Aetia* which the Lock joins here. From the scholia and Catullus 66 we can safely surmise that the Lock, just after narrating its setting among the stars, named its neighboring constellations, including Leo (*Leonis / lumina*, Catul. 66.65–66; cf. fr.110e = Σ *P.Oxy* 2258, 32–55 Harder). Leo bore both Greek and Egyptian ideological significance important to Berenice: for Greek audiences, the lion signified royalty as king of beasts, and its constellation was associated with Zeus *Sôtêr*;[58] for Egyptians, Leo was conceived as Horus keeping Seth and the forces of Chaos at bay,[59] and may also have suggested Berenice's assimilation to the warlike goddess Bastet in her form as a lioness.[60] Now, however, Alexandros Kampakoglou has underscored another identification of Leo more clearly anchored in the *Aetia*: the Nemean lion.[61] Callimachus opens the third book of *Aetia* with the *Victoria Berenices* (fr. 54–60j Harder) celebrating Berenice's victory in horseracing at Nemea. The poem's inset narrative centers on Heracles' defeat of the Nemean lion, whose astral associations, including a descent from the moon and posthumous catasterism, were well-known.[62] While we cannot tell whether Callimachus described the Lion's catasterism in the *Victoria*, the

57 Clayman 2014a: 189–193; 2014b.
58 Van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 95–96.
59 Selden 1998: 344; Kampakoglou 2013: 133.
60 Van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 98.
61 Kampakoglou 2013: 129–134.
62 On the Nemean lion's rearing on the moon see Epimenid. fr. 2 DK; Euph. fr. 84.4 Powell; Nigid. fr. 93 Swoboda; Hyg. *Fab.* 30.2. For evidence that Callimachus may have mentioned the lunar descent see Call. fr. 56 Harder with her commentary 2012: 2.487 ad loc. and

connection seems at the very least to have been palpable to some of his readers: pseudo-Hyginus connects the Nemean lion with the Coma Berenices by narrating the beast's defeat and catasterism just before recounting the discovery of Berenice's Lock (2.24.1).[63] I have argued elsewhere that Callimachus in the *Victoria* fashions Heracles as a model for his victorious Ptolemaic queen.[64] The Lock's mention of Leo after its self-description as a 'new constellation among the old' thus recalls the Nemean lion whom Berenice's Ptolemaic ancestor and analogue defeated at the beginning of *Aetia* 3. With a pleasing ring composition linking *Aetia* 3–4, Callimachus writes Berenice's victory into the sky, her Lock and Lion shining together.

Yet this passage of the Lock's catasterism forges a still larger ring composition by returning us to the very beginning of the *Aetia*. At fr. 110.59–60 the Lock declares Arsinoe-Aphrodite's intention to set it near the constellation of the Crown, or Wreath, of Ariadne (cf. νύμφης Μινωίδος, fr. 110.59).[65] Benjamin Acosta-Hughes and Susan Stephens have noted that the patronymic Μινωίδος ('daughter of Minos') recalls the first *aition* of *Aetia* 1, concerning king Minos' sacrifice to the Graces (fr. 3–7b Harder).[66] This allusion merits further discussion, for the *Coma* poignantly echoes and reverses many themes and motifs of that *aition*. In the first *aition*, the dreaming Callimachus asks the Muses why the Parians sacrifice to the Graces without wearing wreaths and playing music (fr. 3). Clio replies that king Minos was beginning to sacrifice to the Graces (fr. 5) when he heard news that his son Androgeos had been killed, whereupon he took off his garland and completed the sacrifice without it (fr. 7a Harder = Σ Flor. 21–37). Clio portrays Minos as an oppressive thalassocrat (καὶ νήσων ἐπέτεινε βαρὺν ζυγὸν αὐχένι Μίνως, 'and Minos was placing a heavy yoke upon the islands' neck, fr. 4 Harder), and Acosta-Hughes and Stephens argue that Callimachus makes Minos an 'excellent inverse model for the Ptolemies', the world's new sea power.[67] The *Aetia* began, then, with the first thalassocrat of Greek history removing his garland in mourning to sacrifice to the Graces. Berenice, too, mourning her husband's departure for war (Catul. 66.21–25), sacrificed her Lock, which is mourned by its sibling hairs (fr. 110.51), and during the

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Kampakoglou 2013: 130–131. For the Lion's catasterism see Hyg. *Astr.* 2.24.1; Eratosth. *Cat.* 12; Sen. *Oed.* 38–40; *Her. F.* 944–946.

63 Kampakoglou 2013: 132–134 makes an attractive argument in favor of Callimachus' mention of the Nemean lion's catasterism by linking it to Ptolemy III and Berenice II's exploitation of astronomical phenomena for ideological purposes, on which see Hauben 2011.

64 Evans 2021: 107–110.

65 For an evaluation of the supplements proposed here see Harder 2012: 2.833–834 ad fr. 110.59–64.

66 As noted by Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 178.

67 Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 177.

elegy mourns its separation from its queen (fr. 110.75–78). Yet Arsinoe's intent for the catasterized Lock to serve as a pendant to Ariadne's Crown (fr. 110.59–60) points the way to a happy Ptolemaic closure to Minos' mourning and cruel empire. Minos' daughter Ariadne, having helped Theseus defeat the Minotaur, was abandoned by him, only then to be found by Dionysus; Callimachus alludes to her constellation's *aition* as the bridal crown Dionysus gave her in marriage by calling her νύμφη ('bride', fr. 110.59).[68] Dionysus was a central god of Ptolemaic Alexandria whose cults enjoyed lavish royal patronage;[69] Ariadne's marriage to Dionysus may thus function as an analogy for Berenice's to Ptolemy III.[70] By numbering Berenice's Lock alongside Ariadne's Crown, Arsinoe-Aphrodite, with Callimachus as poet-editor, recapitulates the *Aetia*'s beginning and signals the end of Minos' thalassocracy with the emergence of a new, Ptolemaic rule with Berenice's marriage to Ptolemy, forever commemorated in the *Coma* at the *Aetia*'s conclusion.

In discussing Callimachus' references to his literary anchoring of the *Coma*, I have begged the notorious question of the poem's publication history. The absence in *P.Oxy.* 2258 of lines corresponding to Catul. 66.79–88 led Rudolf Pfeiffer to conclude that *P.Oxy.* 2258 represented a first, occasional *Coma*; Callimachus then revised the poem for inclusion in the *Aetia*, and this was the version Catullus translated.[71] On the one hand, it seems possible at the very least that the intratextual allusions to earlier *aitia* could have been present already in the putative occasional *Coma*, especially if Callimachus was already crystallizing his ideas for the *Aetia*'s second half in 245 BCE. On the other hand, the *Coma*'s metapoetic opening πάντα τὸν ἐν γραμμαῖσιν ἰδὼν ὅρον seems to be a textual game aimed squarely at an audience of readers, depending as it does on the play with written lines (γραμμαί) and the reader's vision (ἰδών).[72] So there may well have been a considerable gap in time between Conon's discovery of the Lock and the inclusion of the Lock in his *Aetia*. Even in this case, I believe it fair to see Callimachus' relationship to Conon as competitive in the way I have argued for above. The astronomer's constellation was one of the grandest gifts the new monarchs received, and it was a gift that gave itself anew every year at its zenith. Conon set the bar high for royal gifts, and the competition to outdo it would be a long one. But good things, as they say, take time. Conon gave Berenice a single constellation in the sky; Callimachus, on the other hand, made her Lock the shining star of a textual universe all of his own making.

68 See Harder 2012: 2.834 ad fr. 110.59. The myth is first attested at Pherecyd. *FGrH* 3 F 148.

69 See Fraser 1972: 1.201–212.

70 Suggested by van Oppen de Ruiter 2015: 102.

71 Pfeiffer 1952: xxxvii.

72 It is possible, of course, that these words were present in the occasional poem but took on new meaning once the poet wrote them down at the beginning of the *Aetia*'s end.

5 Conclusion: Whose Catasterism?

The prevailing scholarly narrative of the Lock's creation has presumed cooperation between Conon, Callimachus, and the rest of the court to ensure the Lock's success. But Hellenistic courts, we have seen, were competitive milieus, and my interpretation of Callimachus' *Victoria Berenices* has revealed a poet not so much in cooperation with Conon as in competition with him. He is rather up to, we might say, a clever game of *Ergänzungsspiel*[73] with the astronomer's discovery, for he puts on display his translation of the new constellation into a text. He 'completes' Conon's constellation by endowing it with a voice which he anchors in the *Aetia*, whose cultural history from Minos onwards it closes. We need not assume without evidence that an innovation as surprising and significant as the deification of a lock of hair must have resulted from the common project of members at court. Instead, the imperative for members of the court society to compete for favor provided the fuel for successful innovation—even if they collaborated.

There may be some truth after all, then, in the ancient tradition that Conon invented the constellation of Berenice's Lock all on his own to win a patron's favor. Yet his invention alone did not result in the Lock's permanence to this day, as my examination of Callimachus' *Coma* suggests. Indeed, even in the minds of some ancient astronomers Callimachus seems to have surpassed Conon in creating Berenice's Lock. The first-century-BCE astronomer Geminus of Rhodes describes the Coma Berenices as ὁ ὕστερον κατεστηριγμένος ὑπὸ Καλλιμάχου Βερενίκης Πλόκαμος ('Berenice's Lock, later catasterized by Callimachus'). While Geminus' editor Manitius chastises the astronomer for his 'mistake',[74] it seems that the astronomer saw clearly which agent of change won the competition of deifying Berenice's Lock. And even if Callimachus' name has crept in the text as a scribal error, the slip nevertheless gives the game away: Callimachus is the one to remember who made his queen's star come to life and forever shine.

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73 Bing 1995.
74 Manitius 1898: 256.

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CHAPTER 5

Anonymizing Agents of Change in Philosophical Pseudepigraphy: The Case of Pseudo-Plato, *De virtute*

Albert Joosse

1 Introduction

How does philosophical change occur? One factor is the appeal of new ideas and concepts themselves. This appeal may involve the power of ideas to address societal concerns that are not adequately dealt with by transmitted wisdom. Or it may be a function of their ability to meet demands posed by new theoretical problems—problems that arise in the development of debate and thinking itself or problems that may derive from new political or technological constellations. But ideas alone, by themselves, do not explain their successful uptake. To begin with, they do not present themselves by themselves. Human beings are the agents that come up with new ideas, often prompted by their environment.[1] And this applies regardless of whether these agents see themselves as introducing novelty or as reaffirming something old. Moreover, new ideas must be understood and accepted in order for them to create lasting change.

In the oral culture of ancient Greece (as of many other societies), live disputes were important driving factors behind the invention, fine-tuning, nuancing, and dissemination of new ideas. With the development of a parallel written culture in the fifth century BCE, picking up speed in the fourth, written texts also emerge as important vehicles for stimulation and diffusion of change—vehicles, moreover, some of which are still available to us, helping us understand change and philosophical innovation in ancient Greece. With the ascendancy of texts, the figure of the author as an agent of change also comes to the fore.[2] In the process of philosophical change, texts are pivotal

1 For the purposes of this chapter, I understand agency and authorship as involving the ability of conscious planning. For a different approach, factoring in non-human agents, see McNeill 2010 and McNeill, this volume, Chapter 1.

2 Discussions of the author in modern literature often fail to see that the figure of the author in ancient Greece exhibits many of the same features as in the early modern and subsequent periods; but see Bennett 2005: 31–38 for an enlightening inclusion.

not only as the products of the great minds behind major inventions but also as instruments of those concerned to disseminate them—be they individuals or communities—to pave the way for the successful adoption of theoretical breakthroughs.[3]

In this chapter I consider the ways in which authors may seek to minimize their presence in their texts in order to help new ideas thrive. I illustrate this using the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *De virtute* (*On Virtue*). The so-called pseudo-Platonic dialogues, preserved as part of Plato's corpus but not written by him, were instrumental in processes of philosophical change just as Plato's genuine works were, but in different ways. The case of *De virtute* will show that repetition of parts of model texts can be a textual means to achieve what I will call anonymization: the self-effacement of an author that serves to anchor new ideas in the familiar ground of a reference author—in this case: Plato.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section I discuss possible scenarios for the authorship of Platonic dialogues that were not written by the man himself. This will help us get a sense of their range of possible origins as well as of motivations for writing them. In Section 3 I introduce anonymization as a concept and link it to the textual instrument of repetition. Section 4 then presents a case study, employing these concepts in an analysis of *De virtute*. The final section describes the point of this strategy of anonymization.

2 Figurations of the Author in the Inauthentic Works of the *corpus Platonicum*

If Plato did not write some of the dialogues that have come down under his name, who did and why were they classified as Plato's at some point in the tradition? The answer to these questions is probably lost in the mist of time, especially if we want to pinpoint individuals. In general terms, however, we can think in terms of a number of scenarios.

The dialogues are now known as pseudo-Platonic dialogues. The prefix 'pseudo' may sound like suggesting false intention, but it is important to stress that this need not at all have been part of their inception, nor is it indicated by

3 It would be overly ambitious here to define what philosophical innovations are. As a rough stipulation I understand philosophical innovation to be the introduction and adoption, among a sizeable group of philosophers, of ideas, arguments, concepts, or hermeneutic strategies that are new relative to their environment, regardless of whether or not they have ever been articulated before in history, and whether or not the agents who introduce them see them as new (see also below, Section 5). See Sluiter 2017 for an introduction to the basic concepts of 'anchoring innovation'; and see Castelli's introduction to this volume, Section 2.

the terminology per se. Talk of 'pseudepigraphy' in general follows ancient terminology: a *pseudepigraphon* is a work that is wrongly attributed to someone, whether or not this is done with the intention to deceive.[4] In Greek, ψευδής (*pseudês*) is used both for falsehoods and for lies. It is common to speak of pseudepigraphy both in cases where works have been disseminated by their *de facto* authors under the name of someone else and in cases in which previously anonymous works have been ascribed to a known author, although some scholars prefer to restrict the term to the former phenomenon.[5]

Of the pseudo-Platonic dialogues, some were probably never regarded as written by Plato. This applies to the dialogues that were not included in the arrangement into tetralogies, which probably derives from Thrasyllus in the first century CE,[6] and which are now (following the ground-breaking study of Müller)[7] often referred to as the *appendix Platonica*. These are effectively anonymous dialogues and were mostly regarded as such in antiquity. Of the dialogues that were included in the tetralogies, a number were declared spurious by various ancient scholars, but none were universally declared not to be by Plato.[8]

Of none of the pseudo-Platonic dialogues do we know for sure whether they were originally disseminated under Plato's name, under someone else's name, or anonymously.[9] If its author presented a dialogue as Plato's, this may, but need not, have been an attempt to deceive his colleagues or the reading public. It may also have been the expression of the author's conviction that the text is rightly regarded as Plato's because the thoughts it contains derive from Plato (through oral teaching or otherwise); or because it owes its origin to the Platonic school, whose founder is therefore legitimately credited with it.[10] In those cases, attribution to Plato serves to lend authority to the work.

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4 First attested with the specific meaning of a non-genuine work in Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *Dem.* 57.14; *Din*. 11.1, 11.37, 11.46, 13.1.

5 For classification and discussion Speyer 1971: 13–44 is fundamental. See also Peirano 2012: 3–6 and 42–45.

6 But it may be earlier. See Tarrant 1993 and Mansfeld 1994.

7 Müller 1975.

8 For an overview of ancient judgements on the (in)authenticity of works in and around the *corpus Platonicum* see Rispoli 2000: 465–469.

9 Some ancient sources attribute the *Epinomis*, effectively a sequel to the *Laws*, to Philip of Opus, a follower of Plato who is sometimes also credited with the final redaction of the *Laws* themselves (see D.L. 3.37). Unfortunately we do not know how reliable this attribution is.

10 On this see Speyer 1971: 34–35, 40; Rispoli 2000: 457–460, 489–490; and cf. Silverman 2012: 522–524. It should be noted that most pseudo-Platonic dialogues are different from, for instance, pseudo-Pythagorean texts in that they do not contain doctrine that people

Yet another possibility is that attribution to Plato was a literary game which sophisticated readers were intended to recognize.[11] In the scenario in which a dialogue was first disseminated under the name of someone other than Plato, many reasons can have led to the disappearance of the original attribution, including simply mechanical loss of the paratexts (labels etc.) that identified the work's author or commercial attempts to heighten the value of books.[12]

It is also possible that (some of) these dialogues were originally anonymous. This may in practice have been an anonymity with the general public rather than within the school of the Academy, but even in a recitation culture and in a small community like the ancient Academy, it would also have been possible to introduce texts in that circle without outing oneself as their author. Dialogues may originally have been anonymous for a number of reasons. Some may owe their origin to activity within the philosophical school, as joint thinking pieces. As collective products they may have been seen as common property. Perhaps some started out as exercises for students. One other possibility, to which I will return below, is that authors wanted to minimize their visibility as authors.

If dialogues started out anonymously but were subsequently attributed to Plato, this may again have had many reasons. We can think of the authoritative and commercial motivations touched on above: people tend to buy famous authors rather than unfamiliar ones. The general public and ancient scholars alike also preferred to be able to 'place' works and avoid disorder in their catalogues. Texts without attribution would thus have been unlikely to stay homeless for very long.[13]

As this brief survey shows, there are many possible scenarios. And while some scenarios can be shown to be more plausible than others, and some may fit certain dialogues better than others, certainty is not within reach. But we should not let ourselves be too distracted by this. For there is much more to be studied in these texts than their exact authorship. Their value for the history of philosophy and literature is not exhausted by the reasons why they may or

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may have felt the need to attribute to a founder figure. In the pseudo-Platonic dialogues, it is more often a style of doing philosophy that connects the genuine and attributed dialogues.

11 See Diogenes Laertius 5.92–93 on the rivalry between Heraclides Ponticus and Dionysius of Heraclaea, with discussion in Peirano 2012: 54–56.

12 The latter is described by Galen, *In Hipp. de nat. hominis* 1, 55.6–14 and 2, 57.12–16 Mewaldt (15.105 and 109 Kühn).

13 The practice of cataloguing fields of knowledge by authors, of whom writers of catalogues would provide a biography as well as a list of works, exerts strong structural pressure to find an authorial home for texts (see Speyer 1971: 40–41). Alexandrian scholarship was likely influential here, Callimachus' *Pinakes* being a prominent example (on which see Blum 1991, esp. 150–160).

may not be attributable to a particular figure. Rather, they have much to show us about the development of Greek thinking, the genre of the dialogue, and the reception of Socrates and Plato in particular.[14] At the same time, however, it would also be a mistake to give up the question of authorship as unsolvable and to examine the literary and philosophical qualities of these texts in isolation from the possible scenarios mentioned above. Keeping them in mind will alert us to interpretive possibilities as we read and analyze the dialogues themselves, since suppositions and inferences about authorial strategies inescapably shape our engagement with texts (I will expand on this below). Conversely, text-internal analysis has implications for the respective plausibilities of these scenarios.

3 Anonymization and Inferring the Author

An inescapable feature of the pseudo-Platonica are their intertextual relations to the genuine works and, in some cases, to each other. While allusion, reference, and citation are part and parcel of almost all philosophical texts, they become a dominant presence in many of the pseudo-Platonic dialogues.[15] Most address questions and themes which the genuine dialogues touch on, and they usually contain characters, terminology, or arguments that establish intertextual links with the Platonic works.[16] Some of them re-use phrases from the genuine works *verbatim*, in effect repeating textual elements from one dialogue in another. One text in the *appendix Platonica* in particular takes repetition to an extreme: the short dialogue *On Virtue*. Below I will focus on this dialogue and on repetition as a textual feature, arguing that this feature effects a (strategic) anonymization of the dialogue.

14 See among the recent literature Joyal 2019 and the 2021 issue of *Études platoniciennes* edited by Marco Donato, Constantinos Macris, and Francesca Scrofani.

15 The pseudo-Platonic texts rely on authentic Platonic dialogues (or ones accepted as such in their environment) insofar as references to the authentic dialogues help constitute what the pseudo-Platonic dialogues are. Netz 1998 has called such secondary texts, which take shape by referring to established texts, 'deuteronomic texts'. The pseudo-Platonic dialogues are an interesting subgroup of such deuteronomic texts: differently from Netz's account, whose primary interest concerns commentaries, pseudo-Platonic dialogues do not explicitly build on their model texts.

16 See Joyal 2019 for an overview of the uses of Socrates in pseudo-Platonic dialogues; and Joosse 2022: 157–159 for a closer look at the *Axiochus*, which includes a particularly rich characterization of a Platonic Socrates.

'Anonymization', as I use it here, is the authorial strategy of diminishing or concealing one's authorial persona.[17] In general, in reading or hearing a text, audiences make inferences about its author(s).[18] When the author, or properties of the author (a name, allegiance, origin, etc.) is already known to the audience, this information feeds into their understanding and interpretation of the text, which in turn also affects their view of the author. But even when an audience has no previous knowledge of an author, it forms a conception of the author on the basis of the text.[19] If a text offers few clues about its author, the authorial persona will remain thin.[20] Specific to our purposes, authorial clues may also point away from the actual author of a text to another author. In this way, the invocation of the silhouette of another author in turn helps erase traces of the actual author of the text. In both of these cases, i.e. when a text offers few authorial clues and when such clues point to another author, the text *anonymizes* its author, in the terminology I propose here. It is in this sense that, to varying degrees, pseudo-Platonic texts anonymize their authors. They refer the reader to another author in full awareness that he is not the author of this text. Such authorial self-effacement serves a specific goal, as I will argue in the last part of this chapter: to reduce resistance to philosophical innovations. Note that in speaking of anonymization I do not mean to claim that the dialogue was in fact written anonymously.[21] An author known by name to his audience may in fact have chosen to diminish the connection between his discourse and what his audience already knows about him. Nonetheless, if we diagnose a strategy of anonymization, then, taken by itself, this finding may support the idea of an anonymous origin.

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17 I concur with Geue 2019 when he speaks of anonymity as a 'nonnegotiable *part*' of a text, to be interpreted along with other textual features, and specifically as 'an effect on the reader' (2019: 11).

18 That a particular author remains indissociable from a particular text is something which Roland Barthes, for one, would not deny. The rich discussion following his 1967 'The Death of the Author' (the original published 1968 as 'La mort de l'auteur') has improved our understanding of the role of the author. My approach here is to look at the author figure as inferred from the text by the audience. But see n. 19 below.

19 On these matters see the discussion with empirical study of Claassen 2012; and cf. the nuanced comments in Silverman 2011: 537–540. Contrary to structuralist narratological theory, my analysis does not require an ontological distinction between the author as inferred from the text and the biographical author. This agrees with ancient views, in which authors, author figures and characters are also not seen as strictly separate (see Grethlein 2021: 211–219).

20 Barthes' 'death of the author' obliterates such distinctions between thick and thin authorial figures that arise from a work.

21 Cf. Geue's comments on the possibility of anonymous circulation in imperial Rome (2017: 17–19).

It should be clear from the outset that *On Virtue* is not representative for the pseudo-Platonica. Its use of repetition, specifically, constitutes an extreme in the corpus. But this makes it a privileged case for studying this textual means and its effects. In focusing on anonymization I single out one among multiple strategies that are characteristic of the pseudo-Platonica, as of other pseudepigraphic literature. Other such strategies include the supplementation of perceived blind spots in the authentic corpus, completion of unfinished business, attempts at systematization, providing normative interpretations of authentic texts, (polemic) warding off of alternatives etc. No one approach will do justice to all aspects of this variegated corpus, but a good grasp of each of its major literary phenomena will be good progress, both in understanding the early reception of Plato and of pseudepigraphical philosophical literature more generally.

4 Case Study: *De virtute*

An ancient reader who takes up a volume or scroll with the text of *De virtute*, without previous knowledge of Plato, will possibly appreciate reading a fairly concise and systematic treatment of the question of the origin of virtue: does it arise by nature or is it a product of teaching? The interlocutors in the dialogue discuss and reject each of these options, with the main speaker, Socrates, seemingly endorsing a third answer at the end, that virtue arises from divine allocation. Read in this way, the dialogue may serve as an introduction to Platonic thinking on the subject.

There will not have been many such readers who come to *De virtute* without previous knowledge of Plato. Like readers today, most readers in later antiquity will have encountered the text as part of a Platonic collection. Even in the early days, before the consolidation of the corpus, most readers of this text will have been well-versed in Platonic writing. For them the most striking feature of the text is its repetition of sections of Plato's *Meno* and of a few lines from *Apology* and *Alcibiades 1*.[22]

A brief summary will help introduce us to the mode and extent of the text's repetitions (see also the table below). The dialogue opens with Socrates' direct question: 'Is virtue teachable? Or is it not teachable and do good men come

22 For the purposes of this chapter I will sideline the question of whether *Alcibiades 1* is a genuine dialogue or not and treat it as if it were genuine. No ancient doubts about its authorship have registered, so it seems likely that audiences of *De virtute* would not have had such doubts either.

to be by nature, or in some other way?' (Ἆρα διδακτόν ἐστιν ἡ ἀρετή; ἢ οὐ διδακτόν, ἀλλὰ φύσει οἱ ἀγαθοὶ γίγνονται ἄνδρες, ἢ ἄλλῳ τινὶ τρόπῳ; 376a1–2)[23] This is a close paraphrase of *Meno* 70a1–4, omitting the alternative of 'training' (ἀσκητόν) mentioned there. The first part of the dialogue considers the first alternative, with Socrates arguing against the teachability of virtue (376b2–378c4). He does so on the basis of the argument that no teachers of goodness can be found, as also shown by the examples of prominent Athenians. In the course of developing the argument, the author offers close paraphrase and *verbatim* repetition of sections from *Meno* 91a–94e, interspersed with lines that have no correspondence and that offer transitions between *Meno*'s sections, as well as an occasional summary of a longer section (376c4–d1). This first part of the dialogue also includes a subsidiary argument to show that the absence of teachers is not due to the absence of a wish to teach on the part of good men (376d5–377b2). This point is merely touched upon at *Meno* 93c5–d1 (and again in 93e6–8), but the author of *De virtute* elaborates it into a full-blown argument. In part, he does so by using formulations that we do not find in Plato (376d5–12), while in part (376d12–377a4) he offers a close paraphrase of *Apology* 25c5–d4, where Socrates presses Meletus to admit that it makes no sense not to want to improve your fellow citizens.

The second part of the text (378c5–379b7) concerns the second alternative: that it is perhaps by nature that good men come to be. Socrates brings his interlocutor to agree that this is not in fact the case. *De virtute* follows *Meno*'s brief statement, at 89b1–7, of the argument that if people become good by nature, there must be experts who can distinguish between talented and untalented people; but there are no such experts, therefore people do not become good by nature. Here again, *De virtute* offers a more elaborate version than *Meno* by including four analogies (critics of horses, of hunting dogs, of money, and of sportsmen). In drawing a conclusion from these analogies, the text closely follows *Meno* 89b1–7.

The dialogue's coda (379b7–d10) opens with Socrates' interlocutor asking him how, if both alternatives fail, goodness *is* acquired. Socrates responds that he thinks that virtue is a divine gift, and good men are given to those cities which the gods wish to do well. This section again closely corresponds to *Meno* (99c11–100b4), although it omits Socrates' comments in that dialogue about the provisional nature and uncertainty of their result.[24]

The following table shows the extent and pattern of the repetitions from Plato's genuine works in *De virtute*:

23 Translations are mine.

24 Though note τοπάζω in 379c3.

Table 5.1 of correspondences of *De virtute* with *Meno* (and *Ap.*, *Alc. 1*)[a]

Virt.	***Verbatim* and near-*verbatim***	**Other correspondence**	**No correspondence**
376a1–2	*Men.* 70a1–4		
376a2–b1	*Men.* 71c8–9		
376b2–4			≠
376b5–6	*Men.* 90b7–c2		
376b6–c1			≠
376c2–3	*Men.* 91a6–b2		
376c4–d1		Summarizes *Men.* 92e3–94e2 (93b7 and 93d2 mention Themistocles, 94c1 Thucydides, 94a1 Aristides, and 94b1 Pericles)	
376d2–4	*Alc. 1* 119a1–3 / *Grg.* 503b6–7 + 515a4–b2[b]		
376d5–12		Takes its cue from *Men.* 93c5–d1 + 93e6–8	
376d12–377a4	*Ap.* 25c5–d4		
377a4–6			≠
377a6–7	*Men.* 93d1–2		
377a8–b2		Takes its cue from *Men.* 93c5–d1 + 93e6–8	
377b2–377e5	*Men.* 93d1–94b7		
377e5–9			≠
378a1–2	*Men.* 94b8, c1–c2		
378a2–5			≠
378a5–c4	*Men.* 94c2–e2		
378c5–379a1			≠ (adduces four analogies to support 379a1–6)
379a2–3	*Men.* 89b1–3		

a Adapted from the table in Donato 2021: §11, which in turn is based on the table in Müller 2005: 158.

b See Müller 1975: 203–205 for the relations between these texts.

Table 5.1 of correspondences of *De virtute* with *Meno* (and *Ap.*, *Alc. 1*) (*cont.*)

Virt.	***Verbatim* and near-*verbatim***	**Other correspondence**	**No correspondence**
379a4–7			≠
379a7–b5	*Men.* 89b3–7		
379b5–c4			≠
379c4–d4	*Men.* 99c11–d9		
379d5–9			≠
379d9–10	*Men.* 99e5–6 + 100b2–4		

This overview allows us to observe the following five points:

(1) *De virtute* is composed to a large extent of near-*verbatim* repetitions from *Meno* and two other Platonic dialogues;

(2) These repetitions alternate with passages that do not correspond to *Meno* or anything else in Plato;

(3) The proportion of Platonic to non-Platonic passages seems to be about equal. This must be an intentional structural feature;[25]

(4) The four Stephanus pages of *De virtute* engage with only a selection from the thirty-one pages of *Meno*: the opening pages, the discussion with Meno and Anytus at 89–94, and the end. These pages, we are allowed to infer, are what the author deems relevant to the purpose of answering the opening question of the dialogue;

(5) The body of *De virtute* presents its material in a different order from *Meno*, starting with the section on the teachability of virtue (*Meno* 91–94) and then moving on to the passage that examines its possible natural origin (*Meno* 89b1–7). We see that this corresponds with the order of the opening question: is virtue teachable or natural?

If we consider the various passages in detail, we can observe two further features of the composition of *De virtute*:

(6) Passages in *De virtute* are frequently more condensed than their *Meno* counterparts. In the opening question, as we saw, the text leaves out the option that virtue is something ἀσκητόν, acquired through training. Instead of *Meno*'s elaborate discussion of Themistocles, Aristides, Thucydides,

25 As observed by Müller 2005: 158–159, who also offers an overview of the number of lines of each alternating section.

Pericles and their sons, *De virtute* mentions each of these as part of a much shorter and more general passage;

(7) The non-Platonic sections that alternate with the Platonic ones support the argument of *Meno*. This applies to the short passages that are woven into the briefer selections from *Meno* in the first part of *De virtute*—parts in which the text is indeed a texture of *Meno* and non-*Meno* material, interspersed in roughly equal proportions. It also applies to its larger departures from its model: the subsidiary argument of the first part (376d5–377b2), which establishes that good people do not lack the willingness to share their goodness in teaching, and the four analogies which the author elaborates to argue that there would be a skill to recognize natural talent if virtue were natural. In both cases, the extra material serves to clarify or support statements that are also present in *Meno*.

Given (1)–(7), we can identify the three main procedures at work in this text as being systematization, selection, and repetition. Its systematization, which I will not discuss in detail here, shows the way in which the opening question remains at the forefront of the discussion and provides the dialogue with its structure ((5)).[26] It involves a degree of simplification and selection ((4) and (6)). Key to this systematization and selection, however, is *what* is systematized and selected. Throughout, this is *Meno*'s treatment of the question of the teachability versus naturalness of virtue. *De virtute* carefully takes up again the words of the Platonic dialogue to represent its argument. The near-*verbatim* passages pose the same questions, make the same claims, and use the same terms as *Meno*, although their author carefully varies their syntax ((1)).

For a further illustration of the near-*verbatim* character of these statements (we have already seen the opening question of the dialogue) we can compare *De virtute* 377d4–7 with *Meno* 94a4–7. This passage may serve as a good sample of the author's procedure precisely because it plays a subsidiary role in the course of the argument. Socrates speaks of Aristides,

Virt. 377d4–7
ὃς ἔθρεψεν μὲν τὸν Λυσίμαχον, ἐπαίδευσε δὲ κάλλιστα Ἀθηναίων ὅσα διδασκάλων εἴχετο, ἄνδρα δὲ οὐδενὸς βελτίω ἐποίησεν· τοῦτον γὰρ καὶ σὺ καὶ ἐγὼ εἴδομεν καὶ συνεγενόμεθα.

Men. 94a4–7
Οὐκοῦν καὶ οὗτος τὸν υἱὸν τὸν αὑτοῦ Λυσίμαχον, ὅσα μὲν διδασκάλων εἴχετο, κάλλιστα Ἀθηναίων ἐπαίδευσε, ἄνδρα δὲ βελτίω δοκεῖ σοι ὁτουοῦν πεποιηκέναι; τούτῳ γάρ που καὶ συγγέγονας καὶ ὁρᾷς οἷός ἐστιν.

26 Cf. Müller 2005: 160.

who reared Lysimachus and gave him the finest of Athenian educations in everything for which there are teachers, but did not make him a better man than anyone. For you as well as I know him and have been in his company.

Didn't he give his own son Lysimachus, in everything for which there are teachers, the finest of Athenian educations—but does he seem to you to have made him better than anyone at all? For I presume you have been in his company and see what kind of person he is.

These are close correspondences indeed, although the author does not merely copy Plato's words. The intent here and in many other passages is, nevertheless, to advance again the questions and claims of the Platonic text without, it seems, giving them a new function in the argument.

The passages without correspondence in Plato too—the brief transitional passages, the elaborations and the condensations (2, 6)—are designed to make the near-*verbatim* passages have the same propositional import as in *Meno* (7).[27] *De virtute* is out to formulate once more what Plato formulated in *Meno*. The term 'repetition' does justice to this aspect of the intertextual relationship between both dialogues.[28]

The effect of this repetition, again, depends on readers' prior knowledge of Plato. If readers are new to Plato, the text might serve as a (simplified) introduction to Platonic thinking on this topic. But even for them, the special intertextual relationship that *De virtute* sets up has the effect of highlighting the repeated statements once they start reading *Meno*. Many readers in antiquity will have encountered this text, however, with prior knowledge of *Meno*. For them, the procedure we have identified in *De virtute* is best understood as an attempt, on the part of the author of this dialogue, to show what is already there in *Meno*. In evidence here is the two-way nature of intertextual relationships. Not only are the words of the Platonic dialogues woven into the new text that is *De virtute*, their repeated use also changes their standing in the

27 Readers like Müller, who speaks of an 'Umorientierung' (2005: 160), and Aronadio (2008: 84: 'un'altra linea argomentativa') emphasize that the drift of *De virtute* is different from that of *Meno*. This is a plausible view to hold (see below, Section 5), but we should recognize that it depends on a particular interpretation of how the portions of *Meno* repeated here relate to the rest of that dialogue. In their immediate context, I would insist, the passages have a similar import.

28 The dialogue's renewed formulation of Platonic phrases to the same or similar immediate purposes makes 'repetition' a more specific term than 'reuse' or 'appropriation' (which are also applicable). *De virtute* is far advanced on the spectrum that Hinds describes (1998: 120): 'If similarity completely crowds out difference, the intertextual relationship moves from partial and figural iteration to *repetition pure and simple*' (orig. emphasis).

intertext. It makes Plato's repeated words in *Meno*, *Apology* and *Alcibiades 1* stand out from their context. With respect to the *Meno*, the fact that *De virtute* makes a particular selection from the dialogue also isolates these phrases from the rest of *Meno*, to reframe them as a self-standing line of reasoning. Building on a common ground of familiarity with Platonic writing, therefore, *De virtute* as a whole has a referential function, spotlighting a specific part of Plato's œuvre as worthy of attention and engagement.[29]

It is now time to return to the effect of this approach on how the audience infers the author of the text. To the extent that the author's attempt to re-present *Meno* is successful, the author himself disappears from view. As they read the dialogue, the repetitions will lead the audience to credit Plato with the words of *Meno* as paraphrased in this text. The author's elaborations will likewise suggest themselves to the audience as explicit versions of Plato's implicit thoughts in *Meno*. *De virtute*'s procedure of repetition thus resists the audience's construction of an authorial persona. In this sense, the dialogue anonymizes its author. His identity, though clearly distinct from that of Plato (for a Platonic reader his text *refers* to, but is not identical to, *Meno*), is so thin that the audience's inferences to an author figure forward them to the author of the model dialogue.

5 Point of the Strategy

The repetitions of *De virtute*, I have argued so far, effect an anonymization of its author. This can readily be seen as an intended consequence: intended because it helps the author achieve an ulterior aim, namely—as I will now argue—the promotion of a new conception of Platonic philosophy. Before we look at the role of anonymization, let us briefly review what possible innovations this text may have been meant to advance.

In so doing we should be aware (as noted in the introduction, n. 3) that ancient agents may not have conceived of the ideas they advocate as innovations. They may have been genuinely convinced that what they stand for is an old idea. Perhaps it is only from our perspective that these ideas appear as innovations. But this does not fundamentally alter the mechanism employed. Moreover, these agents still aim at the wider acceptance of their views, whether they consider them old or new.

29 I agree with Aronadio's view on the text's cultural milieu as concerned with advancing a new view of Plato 'e a legittimarla mediante il ricorso ai suoi testi' (2008: 85).

A common view, advanced by Müller in his groundbreaking study of the *appendix Platonica* and accepted by many since, is that *De virtute* propagates a skeptical view consonant with the Academy of Arcesilaus. A key motivation for this view is that the ending of the dialogue seems earnestly to affirm the idea that virtue is a divine gift. While similar in wording to *Meno*, the ending lacks that dialogue's irony and its presentation of the divine inspiration of politicians as a way of downgrading them, turning it into a serious theoretical option.[30] The refutation of the teachability of virtue, moreover, runs counter to prominent voices in the immediate post-Platonic Academy that insist on virtue as acquired through learning. The point of *De virtute*, on this view, is to show that there is Platonic authority for Arcesilaus' innovation, i.e. for the more skeptical conception of philosophy that he inaugurated.[31]

Others do not see the need to posit a skeptical environment for this dialogue. The refutation of the teachability of virtue would also fit in the immediate post-Platonic Academy itself. The position advanced in the dialogue could be meant as an innovative substantive view, without skeptical qualifications, to rival the teachability view in inner-Academic disputes.[32]

A further possibility is that the dialogue is part of the tendency towards a more dogmatic reading of Plato. The systematizing dynamic in *De virtute*, with its strong focus on the question of the origin of virtue and with its gap-filling argumentative support for unargued claims in *Meno*, matches attempts to formulate doctrine on the basis of Plato's multifaceted and often elusive works. This would not be out of place in the immediate post-Platonic Academy, but also fits the environment of what has come to be known as Middle Platonism. In the latter movement (first century BCE–second century CE), many different thinkers proposed many different views of Plato, but all shared a concern to build a system from the building blocks contained in the dialogues.[33] This urge towards systematization is itself a new feature, if one compares it to Plato

30 Differences between the endings of both dialogues are also explored in Reuter 2001: 87–90 (but Reuter does not subscribe to Müller's interpretation).

31 Müller 1975: 249–260; and see 197–220 for his comparative analysis of the text. Rispoli 2000: 503–511 argues that the Academy of Arcesilaus gave rise to the tetralogical edition of Plato's work. If this is right, this would be an opportune time for a text like *De virtute* to become associated with the corpus.

32 For this view see Reuter 2001: 85–90, also cautiously suggested by Hutchinson's introduction to the dialogue in Cooper's edition (1997); it is cited as a viable suggestion by Donato 2021 n. 35.

33 See Ferrari forthcoming on the differences between so-called Middle Platonists and their shared concern with systematization.

himself or to skeptical Academic readings.[34] In any of these three cases, the dialogue serves to advance a new perspective on Plato that arises from within the tradition of the Academy.[35] Whether the text's innovation is skepticism, the view that virtue is a divine gift, or the systematizing mode of reading Plato, it needed to be presented in such a way that other Platonists would accept it. The strategy of anonymization is well-suited towards this end, given the tradition in which it stands.

Change involves changemakers. But these can stand in the way of change when their identity or presence is objectionable to their target audience. The Greek philosophical tradition generally favors the old over the new. Like ancient Greek culture more generally, it is, in the famous phrase of Bernard van Groningen (1953), 'in the grip of the past'. The research project Anchoring Innovation, in the context of which this volume originates, explores the many dimensions of this appreciation of the old.[36] Greek authors prefer to give the impression that they reconstruct ancient wisdom rather than welcome novelty (for which they often employ the negatively loaded term of *kainotomia* (καινοτομία)).[37] In such an environment, a strong authorial persona in a new text can be objectionable and hinder the successful adoption of the text's innovations. Anonymization, on the other hand, points away from the changemaker behind the text, removing a potential stumbling block for innovation.

In the case of the Academy, moreover, anonymization points towards an authority to whom its intended readers are already committed. Members of the school, in the early period in particular, were active authors themselves as well as readers of Plato's corpus. In the midst of this kind of lively debate, it helps if the voice of Plato himself is on your side, because all members of the school, in virtue of being members of the school, attribute epistemic reliability to Plato, albeit perhaps to different degrees.[38] From this perspective,

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34 If its coda contains the view advanced by *De virtute*, it is not a view that one would expect of Middle Platonists, but the spectrum of views in the first couple of centuries of our era is easily broad enough to embrace it (cf. Ferrari forthcoming 36–39). I offer this as a possible view of the dialogue's context of origin but should note that there are no proponents of it in the recent literature.

35 Brisson has mooted the possibility that *De virtute* was written by a Socratic outside the Academy (2014: 374). It is hard to understand the dialogue's use of *Meno* on that hypothesis.

36 See Sluiter 2017; and cf. Asper's plot type of a 'story of return' in ancient narratives of progress (2013: 421–425).

37 On appeals to the ancient origin of an idea to strengthen its authority, in Platonism in particular, see Boys-Stones 2000.

38 Opsomer and Ulacco 2016 provide an analysis of the concept of 'authority' in the textual traditions of ancient philosophy.

De virtute can be a successful instrument of change inasmuch as it successfully anonymizes its own author. Its author's self-effacement encourages the audience to look at Plato as the background in which its changes are anchored and rooted.[39]

6 Conclusion

In its textual details, *De virtute* shows a deliberate concern with repeating Platonic writing, both in *verbatim* or near-*verbatim* passages and in variations that condense, or elaborate on, its model text. I have argued that this textual instrument of repetition effects an anonymization as the audience attempts to infer an author figure. For a text intended to convey new ideas, this is a reasonable strategy because it takes away possible grounds for objection and refers the audience to a common ground to which many of them are already committed.

This self-effacement on the part of the author would chime well with an originally anonymous authorship of the dialogue, but this is not a necessary implication. The author could well have been known in Academic circles, for instance because he recited the text to them. His text's anonymization nevertheless ensured that his identity remained of secondary importance. Moreover, as we saw in section two, talk of 'the author' may hide the possibility that this is a communal product, a vehicle for the aims of a group of people. To judge by the strategy embodied in the text, this too is of subsidiary interest: the text refers to Plato, not to its own author(s). It should be emphasized that, as far as we know, ancient readers never attributed this text to Plato himself. For readers familiar with Plato's corpus, *De virtute*, with its clear repetitions, refers to Plato's *Meno*, but in doing so presents itself as different from *Meno*. Anonymization, in other words, is a different phenomenon from impersonation.

De virtute is a special text that takes repetition to an extreme. As noted above, it is not representative for the pseudo-Platonic dialogues. But it may well be exemplary. To the extent that other pseudo-Platonic dialogues feature repetition, of phrases, arguments, textual forms, these too can perhaps be understood in terms of (partial) anonymization.

Nor is the Platonic corpus the only place in which anonymization is used as a strategy to ease acceptance of new perspectives. The genre of the philosophical

39 For this strategy to work, we should note, it is not necessary that readers believe that *De virtute* is by Plato. The core of the strategy is to remove a new author as potential stumbling block and to remind the audience that what it advances is Platonic material.

commentary, too, features textual means that tend to anonymize the author of the commentary; in this case too, new ideas can be introduced by referring to the commented text. But this is not the place to explore this further.[40] Suffice it to say that in both cases, claims to authority based on the antiquity of a source, which were so powerful in the eyes of ancient audiences, go hand in hand with the anonymization of posterior texts.

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40 Cf. Sluiter 2000: 178 on the 'symmetry' that commentators construct between the concerns and purposes of their own teaching and those of their source text.

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CHAPTER 6

Cicero and Political Agency in Late-Republican Rome

Merlijn Breunesse and Lidewij van Gils

1 Introduction

Cicero has taken up the role of *agent of change* in many fields, most notably that of education, philosophy, and politics.[1] However, he was always anchoring his innovations:[2] instead of presenting his ideas as disruptions or novelties, he prefers to present them as a logical continuation of preceding traditions. As a result, he has been judged a conservatist rather than an innovator.[3] As a political newcomer (*homo novus*), Cicero was indebted to the traditional Roman educational and political systems, in which he could develop and use his rhetorical talent to achieve his personal and political goals. By defending many clients and by prosecuting a corrupt, but influential politician like Verres, he invested in a steadily growing network and gained a reputation of reliability, and he was able to participate successfully in political elections.[4] It is understandable, therefore, that he would not support an alternative political culture based on military power instead of one based on forensic successes.[5]

In the first century BCE, however, the historical odds were against Cicero and a major political shift from a democratic republic to the supremacy of a princeps was, as it were, all up in the air. During his lifetime, Cicero was confronted

1 About Cicero's life, writings and influence, countless studies have been published. We mention a few accessible and relevant studies: Rawson 1975; Fuhrmann 1992 [1990]; May (ed.) 2002; Steel (ed.) 2013; La Bua 2019.

2 For the concept of *anchoring innovation*, see Sluiter 2017.

3 But see Gildenhard 2011 for Cicero's rhetorical use of well-known concepts for innovative ideas and van der Blom 2010 for Cicero's creative use of exempla in order to anchor his own persona (especially chapters 7 and 8).

4 For the way in which oratory shapes political careers in this period, see van der Blom 2016.

5 Cicero's thought about the republic as a political ideal connected to free speech and balanced powers can be found right from his early works, e.g., his early speech *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* (80 BCE), and fully developed in his later philosophical and political work, e.g., *De re publica* (54–51 BCE). Relevant studies on this topic are Gruen 1976; Brunt 1986; Tempest 2011; Schofield 2021.

on three occasions with long-lasting military conflicts between generals who aim for totalitarian power: Sulla vs. Marius, Pompey vs. Caesar, and Octavian vs. Mark Antony. This was no coincidence, since Marius' reform of the social composition of the armies had given their generals more personal power than had previously been the case, as some of them realized all too well.[6] The increasing power of generals on the one hand, and the more conservative political powers on the other, resulted in obfuscated alliances, perilous political debates, and extremely complex personal negotiations, especially for ambitious men from the aristocracy.

In this chapter, we shall investigate Cicero's explicit ideas about political agency and about his role as a political agent in the last of these conflicts, namely the one between Octavian and Mark Antony, focusing on Cicero's apparent awareness of the complex social dynamics and of his own (possible) influence on it. Cicero opposed the tendency to grant too much personal power to individual generals and strived for a restoration of the traditional *res publica*.[7] We know that his efforts did not counter the tendency towards dictatorship that had already started with the civil war between Sulla and Marius, and maybe he had been fighting a losing battle from the very beginning, but he tried everything within his power to force a political change of direction. In this chapter, we consider whether he was aware of key elements needed for political or other social changes, whether he consciously used these elements, and if and how he reflected on their use.

In our analysis, we make heuristic use of concepts and terminology developed to describe successful social changes as presented by Malcolm Gladwell in his 2000 popularizing book *The Tipping Point*. Gladwell showed that crucial factors in reaching a tipping point in social changes are the presence of mavens, connectors, salesmen, a sticky message, and the right moment.[8] In this chapter, we shall highlight a number of passages from Cicero's writing in which he reflects on some of these factors (obviously *avant la lettre*). We shall restrict our focus to the letters and speeches that he wrote after Caesar's assassination,

6 E.g., Sherwin-White 1956.

7 In a letter to his friend Marcus Marius in April 46 BCE (Cic. *Fam.* 7.3), Cicero explains why he had followed Pompey in the civil war between Caesar and Pompey: 'I wanted you to be acquainted with my whole mind and purpose, to know in the first place that I never wished any man to have more power than the state entire; but when by the fault of somebody or other a single person became too strong to resist, I was for peace'. All texts and translations in this chapter are by Shackleton Bailey 1999; 2001; 2002; 2009 unless otherwise indicated.

8 See Castelli, this volume, General Introduction, Section 4, for a discussion of Gladwell's key concepts. Gladwell's framework brings together ideas and concepts from other influential sociological studies, such as Dawkins 1976; Lynch 1996; Rogers 2003.

when he attempted to push for a particular political direction during the conflict between Mark Antony and Octavian in 44–43 BCE. Our overarching aim with this chapter is to add a relevant example of political agency to this volume's discussion of agents of change in antiquity.

Our chapter is structured as follows. In Section 2, we shall focus on Cicero's ideas *about* (agents of) change. As we shall see, Cicero clearly recognizes the importance of the right moment, of connections and connectors, and of certain aspects of sticky messages. In Section 3, we shall explore tentatively Cicero's view of his own role *as* an agent of change and especially the way in which he presents himself as such during this political conflict. In this section, we shall also discuss the applicability of Gladwell's concepts to political change, and to Cicero's situation in particular. As we shall see, Gladwell's mavens, connectors, and salesmen are not easily distinguished in complex political changes, and some of these concepts need to be modified (in part) in order to be applicable to the political turmoil of 44–43 BCE.

2 Cicero on (Agents of) Change

Gladwell's study shows that for any social change properly to take off, it is crucial that the context is exactly right.[9] Cicero, in his letters and speeches of 44–43 BCE, frequently reflects on the importance of the right moment, often in an attempt to inspire his correspondents or the Senate to take action. In November 44 BCE in the bay of Naples, Cicero writes to his friend Atticus that he is closely following the activities of the young Octavian, who is preparing for armed conflict with Antony. Cicero is convinced that Octavian's young age makes him unsuitable for political leadership[10] and he prefers Marcus Brutus to take up the role of republican leader against Antony. In his letter, he addresses Brutus in a dramatic apostrophe.

> (1) Brute, ubi es? quantam εὐκαιρίαν amittis! non equidem hoc divinavi, sed aliquid tale putavi fore. (Cic. *Att.* 16.8.2)
>
> Ah Brutus, where are you? What a golden opportunity you are losing! I could not foretell *this*, but I thought something of the kind would happen.

9 Gladwell 2000, chapter 4 and 5.

10 In the subsequent letter to Atticus (Cic. *Att.* 16.9) Cicero actually says 'I don't trust his age' (*non confido aetati*).

Cicero here refers to a 'golden opportunity', as *eukairia* is translated by Shackleton Bailey.[11] The idea of grasping the moment when it presents itself is present also in other speeches and letters.[12] For instance, on 20 December 44 BCE, Cicero decides at the very last minute to attend a Senatorial meeting, because he realizes that the situation calls for the political support of Mark Antony's adversaries in a conflict over the legal governorship of the provinces. If the senate overrules Mark Antony's claim to 'his' province, their decision would mean a principled stance against his actions in general. Cicero conveys the significance of this particular moment in his speech to the Senate.

> (2) Dies enim adfert vel hora potius, nisi provisum est, magnas saepe clades. (Cic. *Phil.* 3.2)
>
> For a day, or rather an hour, often brings great disasters if precautions have not been taken.

And similarly in the fifth *Philippic*, delivered on 1 January 43 BCE in the Senate, Cicero repeats the importance of acting at precisely the right moment.

> (3) Minimis momentis, patres conscripti, maximae inclinationes temporum fiunt, cum in omni casu rei publicae tum in bello et maxime civili, quod opinione plerumque et fama gubernatur.[13] (Cic. *Phil.* 5.26)
>
> Very small impulses, Members of the Senate, sometimes change situations dramatically: it happens not only in every crisis of the Republic, but particularly in war, and above all in civil war, which is apt to be ruled by public opinion and report.

Cicero's speeches and letters thus frequently reveal the orator's consciousness of the relevance of 'the right moment' for political agency: he tirelessly explains

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11 Cicero frequently uses Greek in letters to his friends and especially to Atticus to express concepts or thoughts. See Bishop 2019 and Elder and Mullen 2019 for recent views on Cicero's use of Greek.

12 In advocating this idea, Cicero draws on Demosthenes, his model for the *Philippics*. For Demosthenes as Cicero's model, see, e.g., Wooten 1983.

13 In her commentary on this passage, Manuwald 2012 notes about *minimis momentis* that 'it denotes that minimal (i.e. insignificant) movements / reasons may cause major (i.e. significant/decisive) changes […]. Another possible meaning of *minimis momentis*, namely "shortest periods", may also be relevant'. The phrase *minimis momentis* thus evokes the idea of the right circumstances as well as the right moment in time.

to the Senate, his friends, and political allies the importance of timely action. As we shall see in Section 3, however, in the particular context of 44–43 BCE, Cicero becomes frustrated by the slowness of the Senate, and in the end he must acknowledge his limited influence on the course of events.

In the excerpt above, Cicero describes the crisis of the *res publica*, and especially the conflict in which it is involved, as a civil war. Interestingly, he explicitly labels civil wars as word-of-mouth epidemics, which are 'apt to be ruled by public opinion and report'. This brings us to a second factor that Gladwell considers decisive in the spread of social change: the personality type of a *connector*. Connectors are people with many acquaintances who bring people in touch with each other. Since they typically belong to more than one social group,[14] they effortlessly reach a great number of people, thereby facilitating the spread of a new idea. Although Gladwell does not include political examples, politicians seamlessly fit the personality type of a connector. Cicero also considers social connections as a crucial factor in spreading political messages and the assertion of political influence. For instance, in the following excerpt from *De officiis*, which was written at the end of 44 BCE, Cicero reflects on the necessity of a broad social network for the spread of political power outside Rome:

> (4) Est autem etiam vehementer utile iis, qui honeste posse multum volunt, per hospites apud externos populos valere opibus et gratia. (Cic. *Off.* 2.64)
>
> It is, moreover, a very great advantage, too, for those who wish to obtain a powerful political influence by honorable means to be able through their social relations with their guests to enjoy popularity and to exert influence abroad.

Based on earlier work by the sociologist Mark Granovetter, Gladwell distinguishes between different types of connections: friends and acquaintances.[15] While friends occupy the same social groups as the connector himself, acquaintances typically move in other social groups. They are therefore much more important for the spread of ideas than friends. Interestingly, in *De amicitia* (22.29–32) Cicero makes the same distinction between close friends and acquaintances: the former are tied to each other by affection, while the latter are merely useful. Cicero thus seems to be well aware of the importance of an

14 Gladwell 2000: 48, 173.
15 Gladwell 2000: 54.

extensive social network for the spread of political ideas and of the particularities of such a network. We shall see in Section 3 that he frequently emphasizes his own great network in his speeches and letters during the political turmoil of 44–43 BCE, although he also admits that he has lost many connections over the years. We shall also discuss Cicero's apparent refusal to connect with the opposing parties during this conflict.

Politicians are typically good salesmen and Cicero is no exception. The need to adapt any message to the audience (one of the tasks of a good salesman) has been described by Cicero himself in his many rhetorical treatises and his success in applying this insight is clear from the admiration for his speeches both during and after his lifetime.[16] In spite of these talents, however, we shall argue in Section 3 that Cicero did not succeed in winning over his potential early adopters, let alone the majority for his points of view. Although many factors may be responsible for this, part of this failure was his refusal to sell his message creatively by adapting it to the various parties involved as a result of his firm belief in the value of the *res publica*.

A final factor that we want to discuss in this section is the significance of a sticky message for social epidemics. Although the stickiness factor of a message appears to be the result of various factors that are at times difficult to grasp, Gladwell also considers the repetition of a message as an obvious way in which to make it stick.[17] We may safely assume that Cicero had no difficulty in understanding the rhetorical relevance of a clear and often repeated message, as he was a master of rhetoric, both in theory and practice.[18] In his most mature work on rhetoric, for instance, he enumerates a variety of rhetorical strategies pointing at their use ('like a weapon') and effects on the audience ('force' and 'charm', for instance). The insistence on a specific concept (*iteratio*) and repetition of a word (*geminatio*) are discussed as strong means of persuasion.[19]

> (5) Orationis autem ipsius tamquam armorum est vel ad usum comminatio et quasi petitio vel ad venustatem ipsam tractatio. nam et geminatio verborum habet interdum vim, leporem alias. (Cic. *De orat.* 3.206)

16 In *Brutus* 264, Cicero observes how a great orator, Visellus Varro, was not *vendibilis* 'sellable' to a large audience: his message was not adapted to their understanding. See Culpepper Stroup 2010: 135 for a discussion of this passage. On Cicero's style, we refer to the monographs of Laurand 1965 and von Albrecht 2003, but many more publications could be cited. Precisely for this reason, we will not discuss Cicero's talent as a rhetorically gifted salesman.

17 Gladwell 2000: 92.

18 See also Tempest 2007 who mentions the importance of repetition in the structures of the *Verrines*.

19 For *iteratio*, see Cic. *De orat.* 3.202.

> Then as to the actual diction: this is like a weapon either employed for use, to threaten and to attack, or simply brandished for show. For there is sometimes force and in other cases charm in iteration of words.

Gladwell's ideas on sticky messages have been further refined by Heath and Heath 2007, who point at six elements other than repetition which intensify the stickiness factor of a message: simplicity, credibility, emotional potential, narrative quality, unexpectedness, and concreteness. We shall come back to these criteria in Section 3, and apply them to what we argue was Cicero's message in 44–43 BCE—the *res publica*.

3 Cicero as an Agent of Change?

In the previous sections, we have highlighted a number of passages in which Cicero reflects on some of the factors that have been considered by sociologists and by Malcolm Gladwell as crucial for social epidemics, such as the right moment, connectorship, and a sticky message. In the present section, we want to explore some aspects of Cicero's political agency, focusing on mavenship and salesmanship, as well as—once again—connectorship and a sticky message. An important question to address first is whether Cicero can be seen as an agent of change, and how we can define change, especially in the context of political instability.

Cicero's political enemies tried to frame him negatively as 'a new man' (*homo novus*), but he consistently countered such attacks by presenting himself and his ambitions as tied to Roman traditions.[20] His rhetorical force disrupted the expected outcomes of trials and elections, but since we have only his perspective on many events of the first century BCE, we are—still—persuaded by his message that he *conserves* traditions rather than challenges them. As a politician, he tried his best to present himself as the anchor rather than the innovation during political crises,[21] taking on the role of a conservative politician who fights against new tendencies. This picture of Cicero immediately appears to contradict an analysis of the orator as an agent of change. But can we really speak of anchors and innovations, of new and old in (political) debates of this kind?

We believe that the description of opinions in (political) debates as new or old is (at least partly) a matter of rhetorical framing and depends on the

20 See van der Blom 2010 on Cicero's use of personal and historical exempla to position himself as a trustworthy Roman orator and statesman.

21 For anchors and innovations, see Sluiter 2017.

perspective that one takes. To give an example from our own times: is a choice in favor of or against vaccination one of conservative versus innovative viewpoints? Is it conservative to refuse vaccination out of fear for possible side-effects? Or is it conservative to follow the traditions of national vaccination programs? Everett Rogers describes the diffusion of ideas as a bell-shaped curve. New ideas initially spread slowly amongst a group of 'innovators', but this process accelerates when these ideas are taken up by the 'early adopters'.[22] The so-called 'laggards', who are more traditional, constitutes the last 16% of the population to accept a new idea. In the example of the vaccination debate, we could ask the question whether the anti-vaxxers are laggards in a movement which relies on medical knowledge or early adopters of a new political (and medical) view on the pandemic. The answer to this question certainly depends on whom is asked.[23] In the case of social changes, including political ones, the direction of the curve of adoption can often be inverted if the perspective of the 'laggard' is taken.

In 44–43 BCE the political debate was about power. Cicero promoted the idea of a restoration of republican values, but another political idea had already proven successful, namely strong and unlimited personal power based on military strength. Caesar had already attempted to implement the political ideal of dictatorial power, and even though he had been killed by fellow politicians, this idea may have reached a tipping point at that time: an early majority of influential and ambitious politicians was within reach, convinced by the advantages of more dictatorial politics. From their perspective, Caesar's murderers and their friend Cicero were the 'laggards'. On the other hand, we can take the perspective of active opposition to dictatorship, and analyze their efforts to return to a more democratic system as the early adoption of a different idea. From this point of view, Cicero and like-minded politicians were advocating a movement that, although it was anchored in traditional ideas, was revolutionary and countered the tendency towards dictatorship. Despite Cicero's efforts to convince his fellow citizens, however, this movement would never reach a tipping point in the centuries to come.

In sum, we believe that in the political turmoil of 44–43 BCE, those in favor of dictatorship should not necessarily be seen as innovative and those resisting this inclination as conservative. Rather, we think it can be analyzed as a tug of war, in which conflicting parties attempt to convince a majority of their

22 Rogers 2003: 243–251.

23 As a sidenote, whether a certain view is seen as innovative or subversive also often depends on its outcome. Retrospectively, failed attempts at innovation, such as Catiline's *coup d'état*, are usually seen as subversive rather than innovative.

ideas. The following excerpt from a letter to Brutus written late in July 43 BCE illustrates these dynamics quite well. In this letter, Cicero explains to Brutus his worries about Octavian. After vouching for Octavian's loyalty on a previous occasion, Cicero is afraid that he may lose the young man's support because other parties are 'pulling the other way'. Cicero and his political adversaries are both trying to win over the influential Octavian to their side, recognizing the crucial role that he might play in the victory of one political direction over the other.

> (6) quamquam et hunc, ut spero, tenebo multis repugnantibus. videtur enim esse indoles, sed flexibilis aetas multique ad depravandum parati, qui splendore falsi honoris obiecto aciem boni ingeni praestringi posse confidunt. itaque ad reliquos hic quoque labor mihi accessit, ut omnis adhibeam machinas ad tenendum adulescentem. (Cic. *ad Brut.* 1.18.3–4)
>
> However, I hope I shall still hold him, though many people are pulling the other way. The natural quality seems to be there, but it is an impressionable age and there are plenty of would-be agents of corruption. They are confident of dazzling his good disposition by dangling in front of him the glitter of a false distinction. So this care is added to my load. I must move every engine at my disposal to hold the young man.

In this passage, Cicero attributes to himself an important role during the political conflict of 44–43 BCE. We therefore believe it is worthwhile to consider whether we find elements of an agent of change in Cicero's self-presentation at this time. In this section, we will focus on Cicero's role as a maven and a connector, and we will consider the stickiness of his message. We will see that Cicero's role in the political conflict of 44–43 BCE was entirely determined by his own political ideal of the *res publica*. Cicero's loyalty to this ideal seems to have limited his flexibility as a connector and salesman.

In Section 2, we discussed a number of excerpts that illustrate Cicero's awareness of the importance of the right moment for political change. Cicero typically emphasizes the significance of good timing when he advises his correspondent or the Senate to take a certain course of action. To his frustration, however, his suggestions are not always immediately followed, and he reflects on this in a letter to his friend Brutus in April 43 BCE:

> (7) non enim ignoras quanta momenta sint in re publica temporum et quid intersit idem illud utrum ante an post decernatur, suscipiatur, agatur. omnia quae severe decreta sunt hoc tumultu, si aut quo die dixi

> sententiam perfecta essent et non in diem ex die dilata aut quo ex tempore suscepta sunt ut agerentur non tardata et procrastinata, bellum iam nullum haberemus. (Cic. *ad Brut.* 2.1.1)
>
> You are well aware of the importance of the right moment in political affairs, and what a vast difference it makes whether the same decree or enterprise or action be adopted before or after. If only all the strong measures decreed during this turmoil had been carried through the day I proposed them, or not put off from one day to the next or dragged out and procrastinated after action upon them had been taken in hand, we should now have no war.

In this excerpt, Cicero rues the Senate's refusal to implement measures that he had proposed on an earlier occasion. In his letters and speeches of 44–43 BCE, Cicero frequently presents himself in this way as a visionary leader who knew before everybody else what was going to happen,[24] but whose warnings were not heeded by the Senate, which ultimately caused the present, dire situation.[25] For instance, in the following excerpt from the fourteenth *Philippic*, which was delivered towards the end of the conflict, Cicero reflects on his futile warnings to the senators to declare Antony and Ventidius enemies.[26]

> (8) semper illum hostem, semper hoc bellum, ut ego, qui omni tempore verae pacis auctor fuissem, huic essem nomini pestiferae pacis inimicus. Idem Ventidium, cum alii praetorem, ego semper hostem. Has in sententias meas si consules [designati] discessionem facere voluissent, omnibus istis latronibus auctoritate ipsa senatus iam pridem de manibus arma cecidissent. (Cic. *Phil.* 14.20–21)
>
> [I have] always called him [Mark Antony] an enemy and this conflict a war, so that I, who have at all times striven for true peace, was hostile to this name of a pernicious peace. Likewise I always called Ventidius an enemy, while others called him a praetor. If the consuls had been willing to hold a vote on these proposals of mine, the authority of the senate

24 E.g. in *ad Brut.* 2.1.1; *Phil.* 2.89; *Phil.* 12.17–18. In situations where Cicero is negatively surprised, the orator emphasizes that nobody could have foreseen what was going to happen (such as in *Phil.* 11.10 and *Phil.* 12.1–3).

25 E.g. in *ad Brut.* 2.1.1.

26 Cf. *Phil.* 2.24, *Phil.* 2.37, and *Phil.* 2.89 for other (earlier) warnings that had been ignored.

> would of itself long ago have caused the weapons to drop from all those brigands' hands.

In passages such as these, we can in a way recognize Gladwell's personality type of a *maven*. Gladwell describes mavens as people who collect information and want to help other people by sharing this information with them. His examples of mavens often emphasize their awareness of a trend or development before other people do.[27] Similarly, Cicero presents himself as somebody who saw that something was about to happen before it did and warned his fellow senators and other influential people about this. Although Cicero's ideas may be different from some of the innovations that Gladwell discusses, he sees himself in the same visionary and advisory role that Gladwell describes for mavens.[28] He is especially explicit about this role in the seventh *Philippic*, delivered in January 43 BCE:[29]

> (9) Equidem non deero: monebo, praedicam, denuntiabo, testabor semper deos hominesque quid sentiam, nec solum fidem meam, quod fortasse videatur satis esse, sed in principe civi non est satis: curam, consilium vigilantiamque praestabo. (Cic. *Phil.* 7.20)
>
> As for me, I shall not fail to do my part: I shall warn, I shall foretell, I shall give notice, I shall continually call gods and men to witness my sentiments; you will be able to count not only on my good faith, which may perhaps seem sufficient in itself but in a foremost citizen is not all that is required: you will be able to count as well on my care, counsel, and vigilance.

Similar to Gladwell's mavens, Cicero is also constantly busy with collecting information about the activities of those involved in the political conflict of 44–43 BCE. In his letters to Atticus and other friends and acquaintances, Cicero repeatedly asks for information concerning the proceedings in the capital and the entire *res publica*.[30] The excerpt below, a passage from a letter to Atticus written in July of 44 BCE, illustrates the orator's maven-like concern for gathering information especially well. From his house in Puteoli,

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27 For example, the price increase of coffee or the imminent arrival of the British army; Gladwell 2000: 61–62, 67.

28 For Cicero as a visionary leader, see Gildenhard 2011: 387.

29 See also *Phil.* 6.17–19 for a similar promise to the people of Rome.

30 E.g. in *Att.* 15.23 and *Att.* 16.6.2. Cicero behaves similarly when he is away in October and November 44 BCE. See, e.g., *Att.* 15.13.2 and *Att.* 16.13a(b).1–2. See also *Att.* 16.14.2 for gathering intelligence as a reason to travel from Arpinum to Tusculum.

Cicero asks Atticus to send him reliable information about Plancus' deeds in Buthrotum, after numerous other inquiries have not revealed anything.

> (10) De Buthroticis undique quaerens nihil reperiebam. alii concisos agripetas, alii Plancum acceptis nummis relictis illis aufugisse. itaque non video sciturum me quid eius sit, ni statim aliquid litterarum. (*Att.* 16.4.3)
>
> I have been making enquiries everywhere about the Buthrotian business, but can find out nothing. One account has it that the settlers were cut to pieces, another that Plancus deserted them for a bribe and made off. So it looks as though I shall not know the truth of the matter, unless you send me a line at once.

Not only does Cicero collect information, but he is also a source of intelligence to others. For instance, after his return to Rome in September 44 BCE, Cicero frequently provides Brutus with information about the affairs of the *res publica*.[31] This brings us to Cicero's role as a connector. We saw in Section 2 that Cicero is aware of the significance of a good social network for the spread of political ideas and influence. Cicero frequently emphasizes his own role as connector as well, emphasizing his relationship with various individuals and groups.[32] For instance, the orator explicitly comments on the extent of his social connections to the consulars in the eighth *Philippic*, which is shown in the following passage:

> (11) Venio ad reliquos consularis, quorum nemo est—iure hoc meo dico—quin mecum habeat aliquam coniunctionem gratiae, alii maximam, alii mediocrem, nemo nullam. (Cic. *Phil.* 8.20)
>
> I come now to the other consulars, among whom there is no one—I am entitled to say this—who does not have some personal tie with me, very close in some cases, not so close in others, but in every case something.

Although Cicero admits that he has lost some of his connections along the way,[33] he remains in close contact with all the important players in the political conflict of 44–43 BCE. He delivers speeches in the senate and in the *contio*

31 E.g. in *ad Brut.* 1.10.5. See also *Att.* 15.13.4 and *ad Brut.* 1.6.3.

32 E.g. Lucius Philippus in *Phil.* 3.25, Apuleius in *Phil.* 6.1, and Brutus in *Phil.* 10.2, as well as the citizens of Syracuse in *Phil.* 1.7 and the Roman people in *Phil.* 6.17.

33 See, e.g., *Att.* 16.11.7 and *Phil.* 13.28–29.

(the fourth and sixth *Philippic*) and he corresponds with individual leaders that were out of town, such as Lepidus and Plancus, as well as Octavian and, initially, Antony himself. Based on the mere extent of his social network and on the excerpts above, one could thus say that Cicero was a good connector and that he was aware of his connecting role.

It might be worthwhile here to digress briefly on Cicero's role as a connector between different people and groups. Apart from having a lot of connections, Cicero also occasionally presents himself as a person who connects people to each other.[34] His speeches and correspondence during the political struggle of 44–43 BCE, however, do not reveal someone who brought these connections together on a large scale. Especially when considering Cicero's treatment of groups, a different picture emerges than that of the ideal connector. Cicero tellingly summarizes his own position in this conflict—and his unwillingness to build bridges—in a letter to Cornificius at the end of May 43 BCE:

> (12) omnibus inimicis rei publicae esse me acerrimum hostem prae me fero. (Cic. *Fam.* 12.28.3)
>
> I declare myself a deadly foe to all enemies of the commonwealth.

Rather than being the link between a number of different groups, Cicero's rhetoric thus appears to be aimed at breaking society up into only two groups: those people who agree with Cicero, and who defend the Republic, and those who do not, i.e. Antony and his followers, who are presented as the enemy.[35] In a moment of political crisis, Cicero did not take up the role of connector or mediator between different groups, but he remains loyal to his ideals, which he sharply contrasts with the ideals of others.

In Section 2, we also discussed Cicero's view on the repetition of a message for rhetorical purposes. As we mentioned above, in addition to repetition, Heath and Heath (2007) introduced a number of other factors that influence the stickiness of a message: simplicity, credibility, emotional potential, narrative quality, unexpectedness, and concreteness. If anything in Cicero's political speeches and letters during the political conflict of 44–43 is a sticky message, it is the word *res publica*.[36] If we analyze the word *res publica* by looking at

34 See, e.g., *ad Brut.* 1.8; 1.7.2.

35 See also Breunesse 2019 for Cicero's group construction in *Philippics 1* and *3*.

36 A search in Brepols' *Library of Latin Texts* (http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Search.aspx) reveals that Cicero uses forms of *res publica* more frequently (n = 321) in the *Philippics* than, for instance, *lex* (n = 112), *libertas* (n = 90), and *patria* (n = 58). Furthermore, the digital tool *Hyperbase* (http://hyperbase.unice.fr/), which takes the total number of words in

the elements suggested by Heath and Heath, it scores highly with regard to simplicity and credibility, it has emotional potential and narrative quality, but it has a rather low score with regard to unexpectedness, and, maybe, concreteness. In fact, we find a critique of this last aspect of the political concept of *res publica* by Caesar (according to his biographer Suetonius).

> (13) nihil esse rem publicam, appellationem modo sine corpore ac specie. (Suet. *Jul.* 77)
>
> that the state was nothing, a mere name without body or form.[37]

In contrast to Caesar (as depicted by Suetonius), for Cicero, *res publica* was clearly a concept loaded with positive values and its protection a natural goal for all the 'good people'.[38] In fact, the insistence on *res publica* might not have been rhetorically motivated, but rather what Cicero genuinely believed to be the ultimate cause to fight for. In Cicero's rhetoric, anyone aspiring to personal political power is to be regarded as an enemy of the *res publica*.[39]

The lack of concreteness in Cicero's often repeated message, however, also made it possible for Cicero's addressees to verbally echo and support his plea for the republic while in the meantime covertly joining the forces of Mark Antony. As White already noted, Cicero heavily leans on the rhetorical force of the word *res publica* in his letters to Plancus, at the time a general in Gaul and theoretically capable of opposing Mark Antony.[40] Cicero's correspondence with Plancus is preserved in the tenth book of Cicero's *Letters to Friends* (*Ad familiares*) and includes letters from Plancus to Cicero in which Plancus uses the word *res publica* as well, such as in the following excerpt:

> (14) omnia feci qua re Lepido coniuncto ad rem publicam defendendam minore sollicitudine vestra perditis resisterem. (…) illud certe cavi et cavebo, ne mea credulitate rei publicae summa fallatur. (Cic. *Fam.* 10.21.1)

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each author's corpus into account, confirms that the lemma *res publica* is used extraordinarily often by Cicero as compared to Caesar and Sallust.

37 Text and translation by Rolfe 1913.

38 *Phil.* 2.50 and *Phil.* 8.8. But see *Rep.* 5.2 where Cicero has one of the dialogue partners present the view that *res publica* had lost its substance and become merely an empty word. See Gildenhard 2011 for Cicero's creative construction of the concept of *res publica*, his personal role in defending and impersonating it, and its (invariably tyrannical) enemies.

39 See *Phil.* 11.6.

40 White 2010: 157 states: 'The watchword *respublica* itself is invoked more often in Cicero's letters to Plancus than in parallel exchanges: thirty-six times, or almost thrice per letter'.

> I did everything in my power to combine with Lepidus for the defence of the commonwealth, so that I could oppose the desperados on terms which would leave you at home less cause for anxiety. (…) But at least I have taken, and shall continue to take, good care that the supreme interests of the commonwealth are not betrayed by my credulity.

The defense and interests of the *res publica* are served by Plancus but it remains unclear what this means in practice. In Cicero's political masterpiece *On the Republic* published ten years earlier (*Rep.* 5.2), we find the lament that the Republic as it was meant to be had unfortunately ceased to exist. But for Cicero, it remained the ideal form of state and something to be strived for.[41] For him the term *res publica* therefore appears to have been, using the terminology of Heath and Heath mentioned earlier in this section, concrete, emotionally loaded, and full of narrative qualities, but for others it was merely a word. The *res publica*—and what it stood for—was thus not equally clear and convincing to all relevant parties during the conflict of 44–43 BCE. Most importantly, Cicero mentions in a letter to Brutus in the middle of June 43 BCE that the concrete ingredients of a functioning republic, like reason, moderation, law, and justice, are not attractive to the soldiers and their generals:

> (15) illudimur enim, Brute, tum militum deliciis, tum imperatorum insolentia. tantum quisque se in re publica posse postulat quantum habet virium. non ratio, non modus, non lex, non mos, non officium valet, non iudicium, non existimatio civium, non posteritatis verecundia. (Cic. *ad Brut.* 1.10.3)
>
> The fact is, Brutus, we are made a mockery by the caprices of the soldiers and the insolence of generals. Everybody demands as much political power as he has force behind him. Reason, moderation, law, tradition, duty count for nothing—likewise the judgement and views of the citizen body and respect for the opinion of those who come after us.

In sum, Cicero occasionally presents himself as an agent of change during the political turmoil of 44–43 BCE. Cicero presents himself as a visionary leader who knew what was going to happen before many others did, similar to Gladwell's mavens. However, he often considers his role as a maven unappreciated and neglected,[42] and he regrets the senators' hesitation about his recommendations and their unwillingness to take his advice at the right moment. With regard

41 For a discussion of Cicero's political thought in *Rep.*, see Schofield (2021, ch. 3).

42 Interestingly, Brutus explicitly doubts Cicero's *providentia* 'foresight' in *ad Brut.* 1.6.3.

to his role as a connector, Cicero had a lot of connections and frequently put people in touch with each other. In his speeches and correspondence during the conflict of 44–43 BCE, however, he does not present himself as the ideal connector, but as an enemy to all people who threaten the *res publica*, and he forces individuals to choose between these two alternatives. Cicero's loyalty to his own ideals thus possibly impaired his flexibility as a connector. Similarly, although the *res publica* may have been a rather vague message to some, Cicero appears to have firmly believed in it, and his message could therefore not easily be adapted.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Cicero's views on (agents of) change and on his own role as an agent of change during the political turmoil at the very end of the Roman Republic. Based on Cicero's speeches and letters in 44 and 43 BCE, we have shown in Section 2 that Cicero was remarkably aware of some of the factors that are essential for the success of social epidemics. The excerpts that we discussed there showed that Cicero acknowledges the importance of key moments (*minima momenta*) and the appearance of a 'golden opportunity' (εὐκαιρία) in this great political conflict. In other excerpts, Cicero discusses the importance of connectors and the repetition of an idea for the spread of this idea. Cicero thus seems to have been aware of the relevance of some of the factors that according to Malcolm Gladwell are necessary ingredients of any social change: the right moment, connectors, and a sticky message.

In Section 3, we discussed Cicero's reflections on his own role as an agent of change in late-Republican Rome. We started this section by discussing the applicability of Gladwell's framework to the political turmoil of this period and to Cicero himself, whose rhetoric presents him as a conservative politician resisting change.[43] We believe that the dynamics involved in adopting political beliefs are not dissimilar to those exemplified in Gladwell's framework, in which people are brought to new convictions leading to different attitudes than their previous ones. Given that politics is a domain that typically involves opposing parties trying to win over a majority for their ideas, we argued that the question what is new and what old, and who are laggards and who early adopters, is not straightforward and depends on the perspective that one takes and the value that one attaches to such categories. In modern times, anti-vaxxers can be framed as laggards in the vaccination campaign or as early adopters of the anti-vaccination movement. In the case of the political conflict in 44–43 BCE, those supporting dictatorial power probably considered

43 See Houghton 2009 for the application of Gladwell's framework to American politics.

Cicero and his followers as laggards and themselves as early adopters of the new political regime. The opposite camp, however, was convinced of their *own* ideal, attached a different value to the old, and was trying to win over an early majority as well.

We argued that, in this sense, Cicero's endeavors can be fruitfully analysed in terms of political innovation and Cicero can be seen as an agent of change. We suggested that Cicero's description of himself as a visionary leader who knew before everybody else what was about to happen in a way resembled Gladwell's discussion of mavens, who are also aware of trends before the majority of other people. The thirst for knowledge that we see in Cicero's letters also reflects the orator's maven-like quality, even though he does not explicitly tie this to innovation. From our analysis of Cicero as a connector and of his message of the *res publica*, however, an image emerges of the orator as someone so convinced of the values of the *res publica* that his ideology keeps him from developing these roles in the way that Gladwell considers crucial for the spread of social epidemics. Although Cicero's speeches and correspondence from this period provide ample evidence of the extent of his social network, his loyalty to the ideal of the *res publica* prevented him from connecting with the opposite side. And in a similar way, this loyalty was an obstacle to his capacity to adapt the message of *res publica*, which may have appeared vague to people other than Cicero himself.

The Roman society of the first century BCE was characterized by major political turmoil and political ideas were an important part of societal and private debates. It is difficult to recover the actual historical dynamics due to the small number of sources. We have to rely for the most part on the speeches and correspondence of one political leader who tried to steer the ship of state in a particular direction. Our ambition has been to look for awareness on Cicero's part of the relevant factors needed to create the major impact he was looking for. Our conclusion is that he seems to have been aware of 'the right moment', 'a sticky message', and the roles of mavens, connectors, and salesmen. However, the stickiness of his message, his connectorship, and his salesmanship are factors that possibly suffered from Cicero's hard-set loyalty to his political ideal, the *res publica*.

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CHAPTER 7

Primus Juvencus and Other Agents of Change in the Rise of Christian Latin Poetry

Roald Dijkstra

1 Introduction

Greek poetry in antiquity allegedly started off with its peak: Homer. The imperial canon of Latin poetry found its first and best representative in Vergil. By comparison, the start of Latin Christian poetry was rather modest: both ancient and modern commentators hold that the first serious attempt to begin a Christian tradition of poetry was made by the Spanish presbyter Juvencus, largely unknown to literary amateurs.[1] Around 330 CE, he wrote an epic poem on the life of Christ. However, Juvencus was certainly *not* the first poet to write Christian poetry, as is often claimed. This prompts the questions of how he came to be known as the founding father of Christian poetry and how his actual role in its development should be assessed. In other words: was Juvencus a true agent of change? This chapter aims to answer these questions by analyzing Juvencus' poetic ideas and the historical circumstances of his poetic activity. It also includes an assessment of the influence of other important agents, such as the innovator Commodian, and the translators (in the sense of Rogers, see below) Lactantius and Optatian. The emperor Constantine turns out to be the connector who brought all these agents together. This chapter will make use of terminology and ideas from Rogers' model of the diffusion of innovation, popularized by Malcolm Gladwell.[2]

1 Throughout this chapter I will focus on the development of *Latin* Christian poetry. Greek early Christian poetry has its own history, which seems to me largely independent of the Latin one, see Hose 2004: 30–37 and 2007: 540. No direct link with Greek Christian poetry can be established for the poets discussed in this chapter; however, Constantine's Greek translation of the fourth eclogue is discussed below. The abbreviations for most of the authors cited in this chapter follow the *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, with some adaptations (for the sake of consistency) with the OLD-abbreviations used in the rest of the volume.

2 See Gladwell 2000. On this model, see Castelli, this volume, Section 4.

2 Early Christian Poetry in Late Antique Reception

In antiquity, the idea of legendary semi-divine figures, such as the Muses or Sibyls, as the founders of poetry was widespread. This idea reflected the way in which poets themselves presented the source of their poetry. Poets often invoked attributes or places connected to these figures, such as Mount Helicon. As soon as this tradition had been established, an extra layer was added, since poets who had invoked mythical figures could now become part of the origin story themselves. Like Homer, Vergil also invoked the Muse, but in conscious imitation of Homer. Ancient readers not only noticed, but also appreciated such intertextual imitation, and Christians, among ancient readers, were no exception.[3] Therefore, Juvencus refers explicitly to Homer and Vergil as his models in the preface to his work (see Section 4 below).

At the same time Christian authors also created their own, more narrowly defined model of intercultural imitation, which offered a place for fellow Christian writers only. A noteworthy example can be found in Venantius Fortunatus, who lived in the sixth century. In his famous poetic version of the life of Saint Martin of Tours, he starts by praising Christ and then continues by discussing the way in which people came to know Christ's miracles, carefully differentiating between prose and poetry (1.10–15):

> quae conversatus sevit (*sc.* Christus) miracula terris
> multa evangelici reserante uolumine libri,
> Hebraicus cecinit stilus, Atticus atque Latinus
> prosaico digesta situ, commune rotatu.
> Primus enim, docili distinguens ordine carmen,
> maiestatis opus metri canit arte Iuvencus.
>
> (…) the book of the evangelists' Gospels unlocked the many
> miracles He had sown in his visit on earth,
> and the Hebrew, Greek and Latin scripts celebrated them,
> set out in prose in everyday language.
> Definitely the first to hymn Christ's majestic works with the art of meter was Juvencus,
> distinguishing his poem by his learned arrangement.[4]

3 Cf. Stella 2006.

4 Text and translation: Kay 2020.

In what follows, 1.16–25, Venantius honors several other poets. They are not mentioned in chronological order. The reasons for their inclusion in Venantius' poem are either that they also wrote epic poetry (Sedulius, Arator, Avitus), or they discussed the same subject as Venantius (Paulinus of Périgueux), or they represented popular Christian poets and some poets of Venantius' personal preference (Orientius and Prudentius).[5] Venantius gives pride of place to Juvencus, stressed by a hyperbaton (*primus … Juvencus*), which calls to mind the well-known concept of the *primus inventor*.[6]

Venantius' likely source—the late-fourth-century Church Father Jerome—offers one of the most important testimonies on Juvencus: in a letter from 397 or 398 directed to the magistrate Flavius Magnus, he emphasizes that Juvencus is someone who undertook an audacious literary endeavor, although he does not explicitly mention him as the first to do so.[7] Juvencus is the last author mentioned in a list of Christians who used non-Christian arguments in their writings, a practice apparently opposed by Magnus. The list is derived from a more extensive one in Jerome's history of Christian literature (*De viris illustribus*). This work contains a similar remark on Juvencus, but also mentions two other Christian poets. One of them is Acilius Severus (*Vir. ill.* 111), about whom nothing is known. Jerome relates him to Lactantius, who played an important part in the justification of Christian poetry (see Section 5 below). Severus' poetry is mentioned rather in passing. By contrast, in bishop Damasus' life, only his poetry is discussed (*Vir. ill.* 103)—a remarkable feature given his turbulent episcopate. Juvencus is mentioned earlier than the other two (*Vir. ill.* 84) and is the only poet referred to in the letter to Magnus. It is therefore reasonable to assume that, as Fortunatus suggests in his interpretation, Jerome indeed regarded Juvencus as the first Christian poet.

5 The presence of Prudentius and particularly the lesser well-known Orientius is hard to explain, see the commentary by Kay 2020, ad loc. Cf. Mori 2013: 364–366.

6 Thraede 1962b: Juvencus' case was of course different from that of *primi inventores*, since he was never considered the actual inventor of poetry. Thraede points to the lack of interest in historical veracity in early Christian thought on cultural inventors (ibid.: 182–183).

7 *Ep.* 70.5: *Iuvencus presbyter sub Constantino historiam Domini salvatoris versibus explicavit, nec pertimuit evangelii maiestatem sub metri leges mittere* ('Juvencus, presbyter under Constantine, has unfolded the story of the Lord, our Saviour, and did not fear to subject the majesty of the gospel to the rules of meter'). Text and date: Labourt 1953. Other testimonies include *Vir. ill.* 84, *Chron. ad 329 p. Chr.*, and *In Matth.* 2.11; see Herzog and Divjak 1989: 332. A discussion of the references by Jerome is found in Canali et al. 2011: 7–10 and Green 2006: 1–9; cf. Poinsotte 1988. For Juvencus' reception up to modern times see Green 2006: 351–372, Fontaine 1981: 287–288. For a general discussions of Juvencus and his practice of versification, see Green 2006: 1–134 and McGill 2017: 1–33.

Another interesting feature of *De viris illustribus* is a number of entries of figures whose poetic activities are omitted. The rich poetic oeuvre of Apollinaris of Laodicea, unfortunately no longer extant, is ignored.[8] Ambrose (*Vir. ill.* 124), known for his Christian hymns, most probably deserved his place because of other merits: we cannot be sure, since Jerome deliberately does not discuss him. Ambrose was still alive when Jerome wrote his work.

Fortunatus and Jerome both mention Juvencus in a discussion of poetry based on versifications of the gospels. These two authors first attest to the idea that Juvencus was the inventor of Christian poetry, or at least the inventor of Christian hexameters. As a matter of fact, Juvencus was neither, as we will see in Section 4 below. The importance of Juvencus in several late antique testimonia suggests that he was an agent of change, but the extent of this change cannot be measured without discussing the role played by several other Christian poets. Indeed, some of his predecessors wrote Christian poetry, albeit not exclusively on Christ's miracles. These authors form only a small group, however, and most of them wrote during Juvencus' lifetime.

3 Commodian: True Innovator of a Christian Form of Poetry

The poet Commodian wrote most probably around the middle of the third century.[9] He does not fit into the standard narrative of the development of Christian poetry which starts with Juvencus and leads to the first culmination of Christian verse, Prudentius in particular, in the late fourth century. Commodian's peculiar verses are now most often seen as a conscious deviation from standard practice. In other words: he was perfectly capable of writing 'good' hexameters, but refused to do so, because of the meter's connection to traditional, pagan poetry. Additionally, his own hexameters were accessible to a wider audience.[10] Compared to Juvencus, Commodian's use of metrical

8 *Vir. ill.* 104. See e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus on the power of Apollinaris' verses: *Ep.* 102.23. The same author also refers to them together with David's psalms (discussed in Section 4 below) in *Ep.* 101.73. Gregory's ideas reached a Latin-speaking audience by the translation of these letters in 382, see Capone 2021: xiii. The two most instructive testimonies on Apollinaris' poetic activities are the Church historians Socrates (3.16.3–4) and Sozomenus (5.18.3–5).

9 This is now generally accepted as a more probable date than the fifth century; see Poinsotte 2005.

10 Poinsotte 2009: xi–xiii; cf. Baldwin 1989: 332–3, who points to the specific uses of meter in African literature more broadly, in order to reach the masses. Other authors deny Commodian's hexameters the status of classical meter, see e.g. Evenepoel 1993: 39 n. 14.

patterns is clearly different. Another difference lies in his reception of earlier literature: although his work contains intertextual references to earlier poems, both classical and biblical (including the psalms), it does not include them to the same extent as Juvencus' does as he reflects on the literary tradition in his work.[11]

Commodian does not provide specific reasons for his preference of poetry over prose, nor does he refer to any mythical, legendary or historical poetic predecessors.[12] This reticence includes a lack of references to possible Greek forerunners. His lack of poetic reflection is remarkable, given the innovative character of his work: Commodian is the first Christian Latin poet writing in a classical meter, at a time when writing Christian poetry was not self-evident and aversion to his work could be expected. Poetry was connected to paganism, lies and the idle vanity of *l'art pour l'art*, all considered inappropriate for people expecting the Second Coming of Christ (an important topic of Commodian's poetry) and the truth of his teachings.[13] On the one hand, Commodian might have deliberately omitted a justification of his approach in order not to alienate an audience that looked upon classical poetry with suspicion. On the other hand, why then did he try to imitate this meter in the first place? And why does he refer to classical poetry? Commodian might have considered such a justification unnecessary. Maybe he underestimated its potential: only one manuscript of his writings remains and there are virtually no references to Commodian's poetry in antiquity, except in two late-fifth-century lists of books that Christians should avoid.[14] Its limited success could at least partially be explained by the lack of explicit anchoring strategies in his poetry, as a comparison with the positive effect of such strategies used by Juvencus suggests.

11 For Commodian's references to classical literature, see Poinsotte 2009: xxxvi–xli.

12 A superficial reference to some authors he has read (Virgil, Cicero, and Terence; *Carm.* 583) is not relevant for this discussion. Commodian refers to Apollo and even devotes a poem to him (*Instr.* 1.11), but he refers to his connection to poetry only once, in an oblique way: *Instr.* 1.11.1. For the use of *topoi* in references to his poetic activities, see Thraede 1961 and 1962a.

13 For discussions of the reasons behind Christian opposition to poetry, see e.g. van der Nat 1963; Deproost 1998.

14 See Gennadius, *Vir ill.* 15 (in a non-chronological list) and the *decretum Gelasianum* 7.8 (*opuscula Commodiani*). It is worth bearing in mind that Commodian may have been part of oral traditions or read in circles outside the mainstream Catholic Church. There is a possible reference in the work of the poet Dracontius, see Stella 2006: 17. On Commodian's reception, see Poinsotte 1996: 271; cf. Thraede 1961: 109–110.

4 A New Start, Firmly Anchored: Juvencus' Epic

The differences between Commodian and Juvencus are apparent. Juvencus was the first poet known by name after Commodian to write a poem on an exclusively Christian topic. His preface leaves no doubt about his intentions.[15] Juvencus also talks about the sources for his poetic experiment, in contrast with Commodian. First, he mentions the vanity of earthly fame, proclaimed by the songs from the Smyrnian spring (i.e. Homer) and the sweetness of Maro (i.e. Vergil, *Ev. pr.* 9–14). His motivation to write poetry that follows seems threefold: improving on classical poetry by the correction of its lies (vv. 15–18); a better subject (vv. 17–20), giving honor to Christ (vv. 19–20; 27); and saving his soul at Christ's Second Coming (vv. 22–24). At the end of his poem he states that the beauty of verse is most suitable to his subject matter (*Ev.* 4.804–805, see below). Although he mentions his pagan predecessors first, Juvencus then turns to his Christian source of inspiration, the Holy Spirit (*Ev. pr.* 25–27):

> Ergo age! Sanctificus adsit mihi carminis auctor
> Spiritus, et puro mentem riget amne canentis
> dulcis Iordanis, ut Christo digna loquamur.
>
> Please, come! May the Spirit come to my aid as the source of my poem.
> And may sweet Jordan wet the mind of the singer with a pure stream,
> so that we may speak what Christ deserves.[16]

By contrast, the seemingly biblical *purus amnis dulcis Iordanis* (vv. 26–27), part of 'an effective series of liquid and geographic images' including verse 9 about Homer, also calls to mind references to the traditional mythical sources and springs invoked by classical poets.[17] Proba, the first poet after Juvencus, refers to a source, *Castalius fons*, in her *invocatio* (*cento* 20). This was a conscious choice, since she explicitly renounced the traditional abode of the Muses

15 The preface has received much scholarly attention, although only rarely with a focus on the differences between Juvencus' utterances and those of the poets *before* him. In addition to the commentaries by McGill 2017 and Canali et al. 2011 (both more extensive than Kievits 1940), see e.g. van der Nat 1973; Kirsch 1989: 85–92; Carruba 1993; Green 2006: 15–23.

16 Text McGill 2017.

17 The quotation comes from Carruba 1993: 310. The most detailed discussion of the verses 25–27 is Quadlbauer 1974, who discusses classical parallels extensively.

at the Aonian peak (*cento* 14): most probably, Proba preferred the Castalian source because it fits better with her biblical imagery.[18]

Juvencus continues a long tradition of poets who presented themselves as *vates* or priests. When he celebrates his unspoiled source of inspiration (because of the true Christian doctrine), he does so with classical echoes. The Christian poet thus justifies his choice for the epic form in imitation of Horace *Ep.* 2.2.120.[19] Moreover, verse 27 refers to *Aeneid* 6.662 where Apollo is mentioned as the god of poetry: a strong example of *Kontrastimitation*.[20] At the beginning of the *invocatio*, although the *carminis auctor* (v. 25) is the Holy Spirit, the wording calls to mind two other poems attributed to Vergil at the time, where it is Apollo who is referenced.[21]

It is also worthwhile to notice what is *not* mentioned in the preface (nor elsewhere in the poem). Obviously, the main source of inspiration for Christian writers was the Bible. It was to be expected, therefore, that biblical poets would be included in the justification for Christian poetry (and/or in the rejection of its pagan equivalent). Although other figures could be mentioned, it is the Old Testament king David, who wrote the Psalms, and (to a lesser extent) king Solomon, who allegedly wrote the Song of Songs, who are most explicitly linked to poetry.[22] A quote by Jerome mentions David in this role (*Ep.* 53, to the poet Paulinus of Nola):

> David, Simonides noster, Pindarus et Alcaeus, Flaccus quoque, Catullus et Serenus, Christum
> lyra personat et in decacordo psalterio ab inferis excitat resurgentem.
>
> David, our Simonides, Pindar and Alcaeus, our Horace, Catullus and Serenus too: with his lyre he sings of Christ and he calls upon the one who rose from hell with his ten-stringed harp.[23]

The Pope-cum-poet Damasus in one of his epigrams also refers to David as a poet.[24] Nothing of the sort is found in Juvencus (or contemporary poets), although Juvencus was well aware of David's poetical endeavors: he attributes

18 See for the introductory verses of Proba's *cento* e.g. Green 1997; for Proba cf. n. 53 below.
19 Quadlbauer 1974: 202–204.
20 McGill 2017: 16; 114; cf. Quadlbauer 1974: 206.
21 *Culex* 12 and *Aetna* 4 (also Tibullus 2.4.13); see Quadlbauer 1974: 193–194, 212.
22 See Fontaine 1980.
23 Text: Labourt 1953: 21. For Serenus, see ibid.: 218. *Psalterium* is used for the harp on which David composed his psalms, see Blaise s.v.
24 Damasus *Carm.* 60B 1; 4–5 (part of Ferrua's *Carm.* 60); see the edition by Trout 2015.

the adjective *canorus* to the Jewish king in *Ev.* 1.149 and 2.570.[25] Still, in reflections on his own work, no mention is made of any Christian (biblical) tradition of (not) writing verse: it seems that the worlds of contemporary poetry and verses from the biblical past were too different. The lack of Bible translations in classical style before Jerome's Vulgate might also have played a role. In one case, an alternative biblical figure might have been mentioned, if indeed Proba refers to Moses with the more or less homophonous name of the mythical inventor of poetry Musaeus (*cento* 36).[26] It would be the first (indirect) reference to a biblical inventor of poetry.

However, these are all developments after Juvencus' time. The Spanish poet lived roughly 70 or 80 years after his predecessor Commodian and wrote in an entirely different and, for Christians, unprecedented context. The fact that his poetic activities roughly coincided with the reign of emperor Constantine is one of the few details about Juvencus known with certainty. Apart from the testimonies in Jerome mentioned above, it is confirmed by Juvencus' closing verses, which also reveal something about the author and his intentions. The poet reminds his audience of the decorative function of verse (*Ev.* 4.802–805) and then points to the favorable circumstances in which he was able to write his poem:

> Haec mihi pax Christi tribuit, pax haec mihi saecli,
> quam fovet indulgens terrae regnator apertae
> Constantinus, adest cui gratia digna merenti,
> qui solus regnum sacri sibi nominis horret
> inponi pondus, quo iustis dignior actis
> aeternam capiat divina in saecula vitam
> per dominum lucis Christum, qui in saecula regnat.

25 The biblical source text does not provide any compelling reason to add this epithet there. Van der Nat 1973: 255 downplays these references ("(…) es geht wohl zu weit dies als Anspielung oder Antizipation zu deuten") and they are not discussed from this angle in the relevant commentaries. Juvencus is the only author to attribute this epithet to David. In fact, David is never mentioned as *poeta* and only rarely as *vates* (Rufinus *Hist. Mon.* 1.3.6 and 1.3.17) before the end of the fourth century and it is only in this period that his connection to poetry is elaborated upon: see Daniélou 1957 and van der Nat 1963: 28, confirmed by a search of the author in the Library of Latin Texts (24 June 2021). Hilary, however, mentions David as *primus organi* in the prologue to his hymns (dated 361–367), see Fontaine 1980: 134–136. Moreover, indirect references abound, since David was unanimously considered to be the author of the psalms. Regular epithets include *rex* and *propheta* (because of Christological readings of the psalms).

26 Badini and Rizzi 2011: 153–155.

Christ's peace gave this to me, and the peace of this time,
graciously fostered by the wide world's ruler,
Constantine, duly touched by worthy grace;
alone of kings he fears to add a holy name to his reign,
so that, more worthy by just acts, he wins
eternal life throughout divine time
through Christ, the Lord of Light, who forever reigns.[27]

Juvencus' connection to the time of Constantine is confirmed by Jerome, who mentions him in his chronicle of the year 329. We may assume that Juvencus made his poem public in the same year.[28] Evidence of Constantine actually commissioning Juvencus' work is disputed.[29] Juvencus also recognized a historical precedent, since he imitated Vergil's address to Augustus at the end of his Georgics, in line with the omnipresence of Vergilian echoes in his work.[30] Moreover, Constantine's reign brought the stability to the empire that had long been lacking. During the third century, literary production had diminished. Juvencus was the first truly epic poet since Silius Italicus: this long period of neglect of epic may have made it easier for Juvencus to transform the genre.[31]

Juvencus' work presents the biblical story in a form that was attractive to people accustomed to the ornate style of poetry, in contrast with the simple style of the Latin Bible. This change was a major and influential innovation, since biblical epic was to become a successful genre. At the same time, Juvencus was well aware of the need to anchor his poetry also in biblical imagery and the politics of his time, since he knew his poetry would meet obvious forms

27 *Ev.* 4.802–812. Text and translation by McGill 2017 (adapted).

28 Hier. *Chron.* ad 329 p. Chr. An alternative date is suggested by Fontaine 1984: 141, but rather unconvincingly: 'Nous serions tentés de penser que cet *explicat* (…) désigne seulement Juvencus comme un auteur réputé, dont le poème est en vogue dans les années 329–330'. Fontaine arrives at his conclusion while (ingeniously) trying to explain verses 809–810, which would refer to Constantine abandoning the title *invictus*, connected to the cult for Helios, after his victory over Licinius in 324. However, why would Jerome mention Juvencus' poem in his historical records of the year 329 if it had already been published in 324? Cf. Green 2006: 3–7.

29 Hose 2007: 557 n. 79.

30 Verg. *G.* 4.559–566 and Juv. *Ev.* 4.802–812. The *pax saecli* fostered by Constantine also seems to evoke the calm and peaceful atmosphere of Vergil's life, as sketched in *G.* 4.563–566. See also e.g. Quadlbauer 1974: 206 n. 50, who notices the recurrence of *mens* (*praefatio* 26) in *Ev.* 4.802.

31 Juvencus had forerunners who wrote in hexameters of course: Commodian (see Section 3 above) and also the anonymous *Laudes Domini* (see Section 5 below).

of criticism. After all, changing the text of the Bible risked doctrinal deviation and hybridization with non-Christian elements.[32]

5 Other Agents of Change: Optatian, Lactantius, and the Author of the *Laudes Domini*

Now that both the early Christian views on Juvencus as a poet and the poet's own view of his role have been laid out, it is time to consider some of Juvencus' contemporaries and analyze their possible roles as agents of change. The most important one is a poet not frequently mentioned in histories of Christian poetry, but whose role may have been more relevant than hitherto acknowledged. Optatianus Publilius Porfyrius (end of the third century–ca. 335), was one of the very few contemporaries of Juvencus who also included Christian elements in their poetry.[33] Jerome mentions his release from exile in the same year in which the *Evangeliorum libri* were published, although in reality it must be dated some years earlier.[34] At Constantine's *vicennalia* or celebration of the twentieth anniversary of his reign, held in Rome on 25 July 326, some poems of Optatian were offered to Constantine in order to curry the emperor's favor.[35] One of them was *Carmen* 19, the apogee of Optatian's art. The poem is entirely traditional ('pagan') in content and includes several traditional sources of poetic inspiration, such as Apollo and the Muses.[36] Despite its contents, the poem has a distinctly Christian outlook. This outlook is announced as *caelestia signa*, or figures formed with letters, related to Christianity. Readers would clearly see, in red ink, the shape of a ship with two cross signs on its hull.

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32 About the risks of innovation see e.g. Cels et al. 2012: 216–217. Proba's poem could be seen as a failed attempt to meet new expectations among the audience. Cf. the insightful analysis of Hose 2007: 551–554.

33 For Optatian's biography I follow the recent revision by Wienand 2017. The standard edition of his work is Polara 1973, but see now the attractive visual presentation of his poetry in Squire and Wienand 2017.

34 Hier. *Chron.* ad 329 p. Chr. Date: Wienand 2017: 131.

35 Wienand 2017: 133 reconstructs this as a book containing poems 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 14, 19, and 20. The celebration of the *vicennalia* is dated to 325 and located in Nicomedia by Kienast 2004: 300.

36 Calliope (v. 5), the Helicon (v. 7) and the Muses (v. 17), as well as Apollo (v. 18; cf. the Pythia in v. 22). Such examples do not reveal the poet's religious sympathies. Juvencus' *praefatio* is an excellent example of formal Christian rejection of pagan or traditional predecessors, while at the same time cherishing them. All Christian authors were well versed in classical culture and adapted it to the needs and circumstances of the new, Christian period they lived in. At the same time, no non-Christian poet would invoke Christian sources of inspiration, since they were not (yet) part of the literary tradition.

Whereas these crosses need not be interpreted as Christian (rather as a reference to the *vicennalia*), the ship's mast does, because it ends in a Christogram. Optatian's other poems, both *carmina cancellata* (grid poems of which the lines could be read in different directions) and *technopaignia* (picture-poems in the form of their subject, such as an altar or a panpipe), are also famous for the artful way in which they combine text and image.[37] Optatian has often been considered a pagan, based on ancient testimonies, but it might be safer to assume that people in these times of change cannot be so easily labeled.[38] It is important to note that Optatian showed how signs of the rising religion of Christianity could be openly combined (be it in a peculiar form in his case) with poetry in a classical, even experimental vein. What is more, his poetry seems to have brought Optatian the career in imperial administration he was looking for, showing the close relations between poetry and court at the time (see Section 6 below).[39]

But Optatian was not the only figure at the Constantinian court who thought about the role of poetry and its possible Christian usage. The rhetor and teacher Lactantius did the same, albeit from a decidedly Christian perspective. Lactantius, who was close to Constantine, had already put forth a theoretical justification for writing poetry from a Christian point of view in his *Divinae institutiones*.[40] Even more interesting is the one poem Lactantius wrote: although devoid of any direct reference to Christianity, his *De ave Phoenice* could be read as a Christian poem, since the phoenix, a mythical bird that died and came to life again, was not only a pagan but also a strong Christian symbol. It was symbolic in more than one respect, since the poem can also be said to signpost the rebirth of poetry after the poetic dearth of the third century (and, from a Christian perspective, a dearth that had lasted many centuries after David had composed his psalms).[41] Lactantius may have been the broker between people with poetic aspirations, such as Optatian and

37 Much work has recently been done on the visual presentation of Optatian's poems by Michael Squire; see e.g. Squire 2017.

38 Green 2010: 67.

39 Wienand 2017: 140.

40 See 'Laktanz', in Döpp and Geerlings 2002: 443–445 (by K.H. Schwarte): the *Institutiones* might only have been published in its complete form after 324, but its main ideas were thought out much earlier. Consequently, the ideas it expounded could well have been known to Optatian.

41 Cf. Hardie 2019: 142–143: '(…) it is tempting to see the *De aue phoenice* as marking a rebirth of literary Latin poetry, and as the first literary Christian Latin poem, after the desert in Latin literature that is the third century, the beginning of a renaissance'. Hardie detects novelty as a key element of late antique poetry, but focuses mainly on the so-called Theodosian renaissance at the end of the fourth century.

Juvencus, and Constantine, a man who was in the position to give a decisive impulse to the development of Christian poetry.[42]

The *De ave Phoenice* is dated either to the period before Constantine's reign or in the period in which Juvencus' *Evangeliorum libri* and Optatian's collection of poems were published.[43] Around the same time (317–324), an unknown author published an openly Christian poem, the *Laudes Domini*. It ended with a prayer in which Constantine is praised as God's greatest gift to earth (vv. 143–148), which is compared to the gift of Augustus, celebrated by Horace *Carm.* 4.2.37–40.[44] Again, a link with Augustan poetry and its patron is established. Since the *Laudes Domini* has been transmitted anonymously, it is difficult to assess its role in the process of acceptance of early Christian poetry. Lactantius' poem on the phoenix and Optatian's *Carmina*, however, seem to have paved the way for the first openly Christian poems.

6 Constantine: Connector and Innovator?

References to the reign of Constantine abound in the earliest remaining pieces of Christian poetry. His court clearly was the focal point of poetic activity during the second and third decade of the fourth century and created a climate in which experiments with forms of Christian poetry or poetry with Christian elements were willingly accepted.[45] Although the power and wealth of rulers generally tend to attract ambitious poets, Constantine seems to have been personally involved in creating a climate of Christian tolerance towards classical forms of poetry.

A first example are some letters exchanged between the emperor and Optatian from the period before the latter's exile. One letter from each of the correspondents survives. Their authenticity is debated, but they might well be genuine and could be dated to the years 319–322.[46] In response to a first, lost letter (to which a poem was added) by Optatian, Constantine extensively praises

42 On Constantine, see below, Section 6. The concept of cultural broker has been applied to antiquity in, e.g., Reimitz 2014. Lactantius' intellectual background and knowledge of Christian dogma may have given him the comparable role of knowledge broker too, as an intermediary between Church and court; see e.g. Goldfeld 2010: 79.

43 Fontaine 1981: 66 (326); cf. Wlosok 1990: 258 (303–304).

44 See especially vv. 147–148 with the commentary of van der Weijden 1967: 179.

45 See also Hose 2007, who sees exegesis as the essential element of Constantinian poetry.

46 Wienand 2017: 148–155, also Green 2010: 65–71. In case the letters are not genuine, they testify to the reception of Porphyry's poems and the introduction of poetry with Christian elements at the Constantinian court, as is also argued by Squire 2017: 35 n. 39.

the poet's art in his letter, but only after a reference to the two first founders of eloquence (*primos facundiae conditores*, *Ep. Const.* 1),[47] Homer—referred to as priest, *vates*—and Vergil.[48] Like Optatian in his reply, Constantine avails himself of entirely traditional imagery without any specific Christian element, which is clear, for example, from his references to Helicon and Parnassus as examples of the heavenly auxiliary forces (*auxilia divina*) necessary to fulfill the difficult tasks of a poet (*Ep. Const.* 1). In his reply, Optatian seems to have aspired to invoking as many traditional sources of poetry as possible—the Helicon, the Castalian spring, Apollo's lyre, and the Muses are listed in *Ep. Porf.* 3; the Aonian mountains and the Parnassus follow in paragraph 8—but only to emphasize that it is the emperor who inspired him even more. The poet continues with a humble comparison of himself (*Ep. Porf.* 4) with 'the noble Mantuan priest' (i.e. Vergil), praised by Maecenas. Thus, the poet clearly links his situation to that of the great emperor Augustus (maybe also evoked by his address of Constantine with *augustissime imperator*, *Ep. Porf.* 2 and 9). Optatian also praises the emperor for favoring poetry in challenging times (*Ep. Porf.* 6). The many metapoetical references in the letters need not surprise us, since Optatian must have published these letters in order to strengthen his status as a poet who was favored by the emperor; more letters must have been exchanged, but remained unpublished.[49]

Another important piece of evidence shows the emperor in an even more active role in promoting Christian verse. This is Constantine's famous *Oratio ad sanctorum coetum* or 'Speech to the gathering of the saints', appended to Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* in all manuscripts and even entitled as the fifth book of the *Vita* in some of them. In this speech, the emperor points to non-Christian witnesses and prophets of Christ, including the verse-speaking Sibyll, servant of Apollo, and Vergil. The emperor—or rather, the historian Eusebius—gives an extensive Christian, Messianic interpretation of Vergil's fourth eclogue about the birth of a child that announces a new era. Consequently, according to this Christian reinterpretation, Vergil had prophesied the start of the Christian history of salvation. Although this speech cannot be discussed in detail here, it is clear that it was a welcome gift for everyone who promoted Christian acceptance of poetry. The precise date and circumstances of the speech are unknown: the year 314 and the city of Rome are mentioned most

47 Abbreviations for the letters are those used by Wienand 2017.

48 Cf. Green 2010: 67–68. The text of the letters is found in Polara 1973: 1–6, who rejects their authenticity.

49 Cf. Wienand 2017: 152–153 about the publication of the letters. Cf. Wienand 2017: 154 n. 101 for the relationship between emperor and poet ('All other indications speak against a high degree of closeness …').

often, but the speech may first and foremost reflect Eusebius' rendering of Constantine's general ideas of poetry and culture in his last years.[50] The audience probably consisted of a gathering of Christian bishops. It has been suggested that Juvencus, although he was a presbyter, may have visited the council (possibly held in 306) of Elvira, his native town. Bishop Ossius of Cordoba, a city close to Elvira, was an influential figure at the Constantinian court. This would provide another link between people interested in or confronted with the idea of Christian poetry.[51] The revival of (Christian) Latin poetry during Constantine's reign seems to offer supporting evidence for a Roman origin of the speech and maybe even for its early date. It hardly seems coincidental that the (anonymous) poet of the *Laudes Domini*, Optatian, and Juvencus all saw reasons to praise Constantine in their poetry, with obvious references to Augustan (or, rather, Vergilian) times at that.[52] The remarkable speech by Constantine might have prompted their praise of the emperor and the courage to publish their poems.[53]

7 Agents in Times of Change

With the help of Rogers' and Gladwell's model, the roles of the different figures presented above can be more clearly distinguished. The first Christian Latin poet Commodian was a true innovator. However, he found no fertile ground because of the unfavorable period of persecutions under emperor

50 Tentative dates of the speech range from 313 to 326. Drake 1985 provides an overview of different opinions and suggests dating the speech to the year 314 and locating its performance in Rome (see also Edwards 1999: 262–266), but is realistic about the uncertainties of his own hypothesis (Drake 1985: 348) and accepts the *aporia* (ibid.: 349). Girardet 2013: 38–40 suggests Trier as place of performance. For doubts about the authenticity of the oration, see e.g. Geymonat 2001 (dating it around 370).

51 On the audience, see Drake 1985: 347; on Ossius, see Green 2006: 9. It has been cautiously suggested that Juvencus imitated some phrases from Optatian by Weyman 1926: 27–28.

52 For connections between Augustus and Constantine see e.g. Burgersdijk 2016.

53 For reasons of space I cannot include epigraphical material here, other than the poems by Damasus who interacted with the literary tradition in a conspicuous way (see especially Section 7 below). It is interesting to note, though, that Constantine's daughter Constantina wrote a Christian poem to put on display in the basilica for Agnes in the 340s; see Trout 2011. Calling Proba the first poet after Juvencus, as I did above (Section 4), is therefore not entirely accurate. Constantina's dedicatory epigram does not reflect on the writing of poetry or the sources of her poetic inspiration. Other Christian epigraphic poems (part of the so-called *Carmina latina epigraphica* collection) also lack such references and were mostly published anonymously or written by people not known otherwise.

Valerian I (253–260) and adverse circumstances for literary production in general. Moreover, he failed to justify the very idea of Christian poetry, which may have impeded his success, at least in literary circles.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the situation became radically different. Lactantius seems to have functioned as a broker and contributed to making the very idea of Christian poetry acceptable. He may be called a translator, but only to a specific group of theologians and higher officials. The Constantinian court was sympathetic to his ideas and the Christian Church started to attract people from higher circles. All this appears even more clearly in the case of Optatian: apart from the Christian elements in his poetry, there are no other signs of his adherence to the Christian faith. Nevertheless, he realized that he could use this religion to help his case, even before Christians themselves had established a firm tradition of Christian poetry. Optatian thus picked up on Lactantius' ideas and took advantage of them. Constantine was the perfect connector, because of his political influence. His *Oration to the saints* was the best imaginable promotion for Christian poetry in the classical tradition and paved the way for Juvencus. The emperor—or rather his courtiers—saw the potential of a combined classical-Christian culture.

The Constantinian court attracted several people with different but important and complementary roles. It is noteworthy that after Constantine's reign, Latin Christian poetry seems to have come to a temporary standstill.[54] From the decades that followed, we mainly have Proba's rather extraordinary *cento*, strongly rebuked by Jerome, and Hilary's failed hymnical experiment. It is only with the reign of the Roman bishop Damasus (366–384) that Christian poetry re-emerges and, once again, a ruler who promoted the arts seems to have played a crucial role. Damasus, moreover, also wrote poetry himself (epigrams on the martyrs), which was heavily indebted to Vergil. It was the final push needed for Christian poetry to definitively gain momentum with poets such as Paulinus and Prudentius. The contemporary rise of non-Christian poetry by Claudian and Ausonius in particular also points to the influence of Theodosius I and his court.

Maybe Juvencus also had a (subconscious) role in the interruption of the development of Christian poetry. The emphasis on hexametrical poetry with Christ as its subject in later sources, such as Jerome, might reflect the idea of at least some people that with Juvencus' epic the main work had been done. The risks involved in the versification of a sacrosanct text also continued to be felt.

54 Also noticed by Green 2010: 76: 'Perhaps *they* (sc. Constantine's sons; emphasis Green's) were too busy stabbing another in the back, physically, theologically or ideologically, to have any time for the lyre of Apollo (…)'.

It took the versatile politician that was bishop Damasus to see (again) the great potential of poetry for other aims than literary competition alone—which he did not eschew either. Damasus was a true translator of the idea of Christian poetry to the masses.

However, this development would not have been possible without the outburst of poetic activity and creativity in Constantine's time. It seems rather counterintuitive to consider a reign of several decades a tipping point: however, the tipping point model has been developed for modern times, which are known through an abundance of evidence incomparable with the sources that remain from pre-modern periods. The fact that a concentration of sources is found from one period, which can even be narrowed down to less than two decades (313–329), confirms its influence. The very possibility of writing Christian poetry in a classical way was now established. The active role of Constantine cannot be ignored: he stimulated poetry in conscious imitation of the great emperor Augustus—a resemblance that poets in Constantine's time did not fail to notice, for reasons easily understood. Moreover, he brought peace to the Church after centuries of occasional persecution. It is perhaps significant that no non-Christian flourishing of poetry can be detected during Constantine's reign, in contrast to the Theodosian period: for the poets of the Muses Constantinian times were as confusing as they were reassuring for the poets of Christ.

What about *primus Juvencus*, then? Modern scholarship on innovation in the public sphere has pointed to the intellectual, political, and moral responsibilities of the agents of change.[55] Juvencus seems to have succesfully taken up all these responsibilities: by his vertical anchoring in the literary tradition, by his horizontal anchoring in political circumstances,[56] and by his awareness of possible objections to and chances for justification of his work. He had to navigate between the demands of a new period in the history of Christianity—with a larger number of intellectuals joining the Church in a new political position—and more traditional forces within the Church. Christian poetry existed, but was not adapted to the Constantinian age. Juvencus found a way to combine orthodoxy and purely Christian topics with the style and forms of traditional, non-Christian poetry.[57] Clearly, Juvencus was an early adopter, but he could only develop a Christian style of writing poetry because other

55 Cels et al. 2012: 218.

56 For horizontal and vertical anchoring see Sluiter 2021: 248.

57 Hose 2007: 555–558 emphasises the soteriological function of Juvencus' work, which may have been relevant to the poet, but not so obvious to his audience.

people, such as Lactantius and Optatian, had paved the way.[58] The ancient and (most) modern handbooks on early Christian literature may single out Juvencus a bit too much as the initiator of Christian poetry. However, as an early adopter of the ideas that were promoted during Constantine's reign, he was a true agent of change.

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58 The influence of people on each other's decisions and preferences is emphasized in such studies as Salganik et al. 2006.

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CHAPTER 8

John Cassian as an Agent of Change

Nienke Vos

1 Introduction

In the early fifth century CE, an early Christian author by the name of John Cassian (ca. 360–*c.*435 CE) made a remarkable contribution to the shaping and reshaping of western monasticism, which he envisioned as an expression of Platonic-Origenistic and well-regulated asceticism rooted in the world of the Egyptian desert. In the year 2000, Malcolm Gladwell published what was to become a highly popular and influential analysis of 'social epidemics': *The Tipping Point*.[1] In this book, written for a broad audience, the author asks which factors contribute to the rapid and exponential distribution of products, behaviors, and ideas. Based on the model of diffusion of innovations developed by Everett Rogers,[2] Gladwell answers this question by identifying a number of essential elements: the type of communicators involved and the various roles they play, the 'stickiness' of the message, and contextual aspects.[3]

In this chapter, I present the results of an experiment: I shall read the life and work of Cassian through the lens of Rogers' and Gladwell's model to explain Cassian's agency in (re-)inventing and propagating an ethically focused, psychologically sophisticated, and well-regulated brand of desert-inspired monasticism in late ancient, early Christian Gaul.[4] While thinking through notions from Gladwell's *Tipping Point*, I observed strong resonances with Cassian's project of making his mark on the nascent monasticism of late ancient Gaul.

1 Originally published in 2000; in my contribution, I shall refer consistently to the paperback edition of 2002.

2 Rogers 1962.

3 On the models of both Rogers and Gladwell, see Castelli, this volume, General Introduction, Section 4.

4 Compare also Clements 2020; from the perspective of modern (philosophical) theories (for instance, those of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler) and debates, this study delves more deeply into the way Cassian envisaged the workings of human agency. Another important publication, Schenk 2022, came out after this contribution had been finalized; therefore, its results have not been integrated in the text. A number of relevant references and one quotation, however, are included in the footnotes.

It seemed fruitful to test this intuition, apply Gladwell's categories to Cassian's work, and see what this would yield. Because the outcome of this reading experiment was substantial, I have limited my analysis to Gladwell's paradigm, which is not to deny that the interpretation of Cassian's role as an agent of cultural change might profit from other modern approaches to the dynamics of change as well. I also hasten to add that it is not my aim to 'prove Gladwell right': it is simply my conviction that the *lens* he provides shows up elements in Cassian that would otherwise remain unnoticed, or that at least would not be connected and clustered in the same meaningful way. To be sure, Gladwell writes for a postmodern audience and in many respects our contemporary context is different from that of Cassian. When Gladwell considers recent developments, for instance, it is possible for him to track changes minutely. For the period of late antiquity, such detailed chronological tracking is often impossible because the necessary information has not been transmitted. Despite such discrepancies, however, enough fascinating parallels remain, and these will be discussed in this chapter. As part of my discussion, I shall include a close reading of a section from Cassian's work and link this to two aspects that are either absent from or implicit in Gladwell, thus adapting his model.

In what follows, I shall use the basic design of *The Tipping Point* as a tool, focusing on notions that resonate with Cassian. When certain details of Gladwell's analysis are less applicable, I shall generally not include these in my reading. Taking all this into account, we have to remember that Gladwell's model is not about absolute causation but about contributing factors and degrees of probability. Consequently, it is possible that all relevant factors are present without these resulting in exponential change. Towards the end of my analysis I shall also note that the success of a particular movement, such as Cassian's brand of monasticism, does not necessarily imply the failure of competitive trends—to the contrary.

To start our investigation, I shall sketch Cassian's biography including the general background of his life as well as matters pertaining specifically to our topic. Next, Cassian's agency of change is discussed in more detail based on Gladwell's core categories of, respectively, the communicator, the message, and the context. Then, Cassian's lasting influence is demonstrated on the basis of three examples from reception history: his mark on the *Rule of Benedict*, the work of Gregory the Great, and the Irish Penitentials. At the end of that section (7), I refer to the paradox of competing movements that are successful on opposite ends of the spectrum. In the conclusion, the main ingredients of Cassian's effective agency are summarized.

2 An Outline of Cassian's Life[5]

As the approximate dates in this introduction will indicate, much of Cassian's life is shrouded in mystery, including the years of his birth and death. It is also unclear where he originated from. Some scholars opt for southern Gaul, where he spent the last, remarkably productive phase of his life, while others believe he came from the Balkans, a region bridging East and West, which would explain his bilingualism: he was fluent in both Greek and Latin.[6] For reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter, Cassian was quite reticent about his life, and his biography must be reconstructed on the basis of remarks culled from his own works and scant references in works by other authors: a letter by Pope Innocent I, Palladius' *Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom*, and Gennadius' *On Illustrious Men*.[7] Despite the lack of evidence, however, it is possible to construct a basic outline of Cassian's life, including the formative relationships and events that determined his career. One major concurrence of relationship and event occurred around 380, when Cassian settled in Bethlehem with the person who would be a life-long friend: Germanus. This companion was older than Cassian and together they became monks in the Holy Land.[8]

In doing so, they participated in a religious movement that had gained momentum within Christianity from the late third century onwards: monasticism. Men and women were increasingly practicing a lifestyle of renunciation that they believed would aid their spiritual growth. Their practices included sexual abstinence, poverty, fasting, social isolation, and similar behaviors, usually referred to collectively as 'asceticism' from the Greek *askêsis* ('training').

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5 This biographical introduction is based on Harmless 2004: 373–378 and Stewart 1998: 3–26. Cf. Schenk 2022: 9–13.

6 Stewart 1998: 4–6, and esp. 143, n. 24 with a reference to *Conf.* 16.1 ('conversing with Abba Joseph in Greek') and *Inst.* 5.39 ('about another monk in Egypt who knew only Latin'); cf. 143, n. 25: Cassian's 'biblical quotations are clearly based on the Septuagint' and in *De incarnatione* 'he refers to several Greek theological texts'. In this contribution, I shall consistently use the abbreviation *Conf.* for the *Conferences* and *Inst.* for the *Institutes*; see also n. 22 below.

7 Harmless 2004: 374; the first two sources are dated prior to Cassian's own writings, the last one appeared decades later (cf. 403, n. 3: references are to Gennadius, *De viris illustribus* 62, to Palladius, *Dialogus de vita Chrysostomi* 3, and to Innocentius' *Epistula* 7 as quoted by Sozomen in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.62).

8 See Stewart 1998: 143–144, n. 30: *Conf.* 16.1 (their friendship), *Conf.* 24 ('common homeland'), *Conf.* 1.1 and 16.1 (on sharing the monastic life in both Bethlehem and Egypt), *Conf.* 17 (on the 'dilemma of returning to Bethlehem or not'); Stewart 1998: 6 refers to *Conf.* 14.9.4, where Cassian is addressed as 'the younger'; more on Germanus as the elder of the two in Stewart 1998: 13–15.

These physical aspects of their conduct were accompanied by 'more spiritual' activities such as reading the Bible, meditation, and prayer. A crucial dimension of monastic life was the so-called 'battle with the demons', for the life of virtue was born out of a 'war against vices', which often appeared in the personified guise of demonic beings. The ultimate aim of ascetic living was the salvation of one's soul in union, or communion, with God—in both this life and the life to come.[9]

This early Christian quest for holiness had roots in both Judaism and Greco-Roman philosophical traditions,[10] and was organized in different ways: from a life of isolation in caves or cells to the communal life of monasteries.[11] The need to regulate monastic living comes out in the Pachomian rules, monastic injunctions that originated in the Pachomian monasteries in Upper Egypt.[12] Eventually, such rules were also produced in the western parts of the Roman world; I shall address this topic in Section 7 below.

For now, let us return to Bethlehem, where Cassian and Germanus began their monastic journey. They were part of a Greek-speaking community[13] and came into contact with an Egyptian monk named Pinufius, who sparked their interest in Egyptian monasticism. After a few years, they decided to visit Egypt. First, they encountered various monastic settlements in the delta of the Nile before putting down roots in the famous desert of Scetis, southwest of Alexandria, in the Wadi al-Natrun.[14] Scetis was a 'semi-cenobitic' colony with monks living in isolation during the week and meeting up for church services and meals on weekends.[15] Cassian and Germanus became part of a group, a *congregatio*, which had Origenistic leanings:[16] they drew inspiration from the controversial third-century Christian Platonist Origen of Alexandria. Soon after his death in ca. 254 and around the year 300, his ideas had come under attack because of their highly spiritualizing character.[17] It would not be long before

9 For an elaborate study of monasticism, see Harmless 2004; for a concise description of ascetic living, see, for instance, Stewart 2000: 344–366, more specifically at 346.

10 See, for instance, Burton Christie 1993: 48–54.

11 See Harmless 2004: 417–469: 'Monastic Origins: perspectives, discoveries, and disputed questions' (chapter 13); note the quotation from Goehring's work (2004: 421): 'a complex continuum from the fully solitary monk to the fully communal monk'; Goehring 1999: 54.

12 Harmless 2004: 122–132.

13 Stewart 1998: 6 ('Cassian seems to have been formed in an entirely Greek monastic milieu'); ibid. argumentation and additional references.

14 Stewart 1998: 10 (the reference includes endnote 70; see Stewart 1998: 146, n. 70, which lists references to Scetis in *Conf. Pref.* 1, 2, 7 and *Conf.* 1.1, 3.1.1, 10.2.3, 18.15.1, 18.16.15).

15 Harmless 2004: 173–180.

16 Stewart 1998: 10 (cf. 1998: 147, n. 74: references to *Conf.* 3.1.1, 10.2.3, 18.15.1).

17 For more on Origen, see, for instance, Torjesen 1986.

another controversy would emerge, as we shall see. During his time in Egypt, Cassian came into contact with an exceptional thinker who was also inspired by Origen: Evagrius of Pontus, based in Kellia, an outpost of Nitria, ascetic centers similar to Scetis. Below, in the context of 'Cassian as early adopter and innovator', I shall discuss Evagrius further as 'the single most important influence on Cassian's monastic theology'.[18]

Despite this 'single most important influence', Cassian never mentions his master by name, which can be explained by the Origenistic controversy that broke out in 399 CE, in all likelihood causing Germanus and Cassian to flee and find refuge in Constantinople. In that city, they came under the protection of the famous bishop and orator John Chrysostom. The renewed condemnation of Origen had been started by Theophilus, archbishop of Alexandria, who subsequently aimed his arrows at Chrysostom. To plead the cause of their protector, Germanus and Cassian, who had been ordained by the bishop to the presbyterate and the deaconate respectively, traveled to Rome in 404 to speak to the Pope. This was of no avail: Chrysostom was banned from the city and died in exile three years later. It seems that Germanus also died around this time.[19]

Twice, Cassian had experienced an attack on a respected and influential mentor. This led to reticence: he never mentions Evagrius by name and Chrysostom is only referred to in Cassian's final work, which he completed towards the end of his life.[20] Ten years of silence pass by between the journey to Rome and a reappearance in Massilia, modern-day Marseilles, where he founds two monasteries,[21] and where he will produce the works for which he has become famous: the *Institutes* (*Inst.*, Lat.: *De institutis*) and the *Conferences* (*Conf.*, Lat.: *Collationes/Conlationes*).[22] These will be elaborated on in Sections 3 and 4 below. After unfortunate involvement in several doctrinal disputes,[23]

18 Stewart 1998: 11. Cf. Schenk 2022: 17–20 (on Origen, the Origenist controversy, and Evagrius).

19 Harmless 2004: 377.

20 Harmless 2004: 377; reference to *De incarnatione* 7.31. Cf. Schenk 2022: 20–22 (on Chrysostom).

21 Stewart 1998: 16 (see also 151, n. 139: ref. to Gennadius, *De viris illustribus* 52).

22 Editions of both works have been published in the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* series: in 1888 and 1886 respectively (ed. M. Petschenig; CSEL 17 and 13). English translations are by Boniface Ramsey (Ancient Christian Writers series 58 and 57; 2000 and 1997).

23 Stewart 1998: 19–24 ('Grace and free will' and 'Against Nestorius'). See also Casiday 2007, which can be read as a rehabilitation of Cassian over and against those who unfairly label(ed) him as a (semi-)Pelagian and—by implication—a 'heretic'. Although the controversies regarding 'grace and free will' are theologically closely related to the monastic

Cassian died probably around 435 and was buried in Marseilles, where his resting-place was destroyed during the French Revolution.[24]

Before moving on to Cassian's role of communicator, let us recapitulate the elements from his biography that are important to explain Cassian's agency in steering Gallic monasticism towards an ethical,[25] psychologically oriented, and rule-based form of desert-inspired asceticism: his bilingualism, his friendship with Germanus, his first-hand experience of Egyptian monastic practice, his profound knowledge of Evagrius' thought, his contacts in major cities such as Constantinople and Rome, and his ambassadorial role, which was possibly enhanced by his ordination to the deaconate, because this office had the activity of 'mediation' at its core.[26]

3 Cassian's Project and His Communicative Roles of Connector, Maven, and Salesman

In this section, I shall comment on the communicative roles distinguished by Gladwell and how these relate to Cassian. At times, I shall refer to these roles by the umbrella term of 'messenger roles'. I derive the concept of 'messenger' from Gladwell's use of the word 'message' to indicate the 'object' of transmission. Although Gladwell also discusses commercial products and other material substances that are being diffused, I focus on the dissemination of ideas and practices, often described as 'messages' in *The Tipping Point* (see, for instance, Section 4 below). Before using the specific roles of connector, maven, and salesman to highlight Cassian's agency,[27] however, I shall briefly sketch his project and the objectives he envisaged in adapting his Egyptian and Evagrian experiences of ascetic living for his new context of Gallic Christianity.[28]

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aspirations of Cassian, they are not the focus of this chapter and will therefore not be further discussed in this particular context. Cf. Schenk 2022: 131–153 ('Wille und Gnade') and 323 ('These VIII').

24 Harmless 2004: 378.

25 Cf. Clements 2020: 172 ('We stand to benefit from this integration of a theory of human agency with the practical considerations of ethical formation'.) and 179 ('I therefore foreground in Cassian what I see as an ethics for fractured selves in shifting worlds'.).

26 For new and important research on the role of the deacon in early Christianity, see Koet 2019.

27 Gladwell 2002: 14, 30–88 (chapter 2: 'The law of the few: connectors, mavens, and salesmen').

28 Cf. Markus 1997: 19, cited by Clements 2020: 4, on the period 380–430 CE as a 'watershed' regarding the question as to what it meant to be a Christian in a rapidly Christianizing Roman society. Cf. also Clements 2020: 166–167.

As indicated in the biographical outline above, Cassian spent the last twenty years of his life in Gaul. In different respects this was the most productive time of his life. He founded two monasteries, expanded his network, and wrote his *De institutis* and the *Collationes*, major works that would become popular quite rapidly and that eventually would have an impressive history of reception. Cassian wrote his masterpieces at a time when Gallic monasticism was evolving: monasteries were being founded and ascetic experiments were carried out. But he did not approve of everything he saw. In his opinion, the monasticism he encountered was flawed in many ways. It was too focused on miracles, which were, for instance, highlighted in the popular *Life of Martin* by Sulpicius Severus.[29] In addition, the fundamental elements of poverty, manual labor, and obedience were neglected. To Cassian's mind, this type of monastic living was too unregulated,[30] and his projects are thus plausibly interpreted as attempts to alter the course of western monasticism. Cassian, who had been shaped by eastern traditions, considered this brand of asceticism as the norm: it was his aim to bring 'Egypt to the West'.[31] Therefore, he contrasted thaumaturgical interests and unruly behavior with expositions on the life of virtue and spiritual perfection.[32] His first work, the *Institutes*, consists of twelve books: the first four contain specific instructions on monastic dress, prayer, and other matters related to communal living, while books 5 to 12 discuss the eight principal vices distinguished by Evagrius of Pontus: gluttony, fornication, love of money, anger, sadness, listlessness (*akêdia*), vainglory, and pride.[33] The *Collationes* follow a different format: they are not instructions but rather conversations. Cassian presents the work as a travelogue: with Germanus he visits the monks of Egypt who share their wisdom. The *Conferences* draw upon Cassian's personal experience: they present the author as narrator, his friend in the role of questioner, and a range of *abbas* ('fathers') as sources of spiritual knowledge. Having initially planned a composition of ten books, Cassian eventually wrote three sets, with two additional sets of seven books each completing the initial ten.[34] In the following section on Cassian's 'message', I shall discuss one of the *Conferences* more in depth, but let us first consider Cassian as 'connector'.

29 Cf. Harmless 2004: 379 for the polemic against a focus on miracles. Sulpicius Severus published his *vita* on Martin of Tours probably in 396–397, around the time of Martin's death. See Stancliffe 1983 for more on Martin and Sulpicius; see Burton 2017 for a recent edition, commentary, and translation.

30 Stewart 1998: 16–19.

31 Cf. Harmless 2004: 373: 'Cassian, more than anyone else, brought Egypt to the West'.

32 Compare also Clements 2020.

33 Harmless 2004: 378–386.

34 Harmless 2004: 386–391.

A connector is someone who has established an enormous network of acquaintances through which a message can spread rapidly.[35] Even before he came to Gaul, Cassian seems to have had a remarkable network, including such eminent theologians as Evagrius and illustrious bishops like John Chrysostom and Innocent I. When we observe the prefaces to his works, we see such networking in action, as Cassian connects with the elite circles of his day by way of his prologues while simultaneously showcasing his well-connectedness. His *Institutes*, for instance, are dedicated to Castor, bishop of Julia Apta, northwest of Marseilles.[36] Cassian provides the context of his work: Castor has turned to him for advice on the foundation of a monastery within his diocese. In the preface, the author clearly polemicizes against pre-existing forms of monastic practice in the West. It is also clear, as Stewart notes, that 'Cassian sets his sights beyond Castor's territory'.[37]

In the prefaces to the *Conferences*, Cassian displays his connections similarly. The first set is dedicated to Leontius, bishop of Fréjus, and to a monk named Helladius. Leontius was Castor's brother; significantly, the insular monastic settlement of Lérins was part of the diocese of Fréjus and Leontius had ordained its first abbot, Honoratus. Lérins was what Stewart calls 'the monastic powerhouse of southern Gaul'. Perhaps Leontius was even involved in the composition of the first Lerinian Rule. Helladius, the other dedicatee, was ordained bishop soon after Cassian's dedication was written.[38] The second set of *Conferences* shows an even stronger connection to Lérins: they are dedicated to Honoratus, the abbot, and to Eucherius, a monk of the Lerinian community, later bishop of Lyons. The latter authored several monastic works in his own right and would produce an abstract of Cassian's *Institutes*.[39] Finally, the third set of *Conferences* was dedicated to four monks who were based on the Stoechadic islands, near Marseilles. Jovinian, Minervius, and Leontius are not known from other sources, but the fourth monk was Theodore: in time, he would succeed Leontius as bishop of Fréjus. It is clear that through these dedications, Cassian presented himself as an authority figure when it came to matters monastic. As Stewart sums up: 'He came to know all of the key players in

35 Gladwell 2002: 30–59.

36 Stewart 1998: 16 (see the preface to the *Institutes*).

37 Stewart 1998: 17.

38 Stewart 1998: 18. The suggestion that Leontius was involved in the composition of the Lerinian Rule was made by Adalbert de Vogüé; see Stewart's annotation and bibliography ad loc. for references.

39 Stewart 1998: 18 (cf. 154, n. 166: the work is now lost).

the growing eastern-oriented monastic movements and influenced their work through his writings'.[40]

Gladwell also mentions 'mavens' and 'salesmen' as crucial figures for 'spreading the news'. A maven combines expert knowledge with a desire to share his knowledge with others 'for free'.[41] This definition fits Cassian, who linked first-hand experience of eastern monasticism with a desire to communicate this expertise to others. Stewart lauds his didactic skills and portrays him primarily as teacher, which is also the final word of his insightful book on Cassian's life and work: 'In the end his importance is greatest not to the historical theologians who puzzle over his thought but to those of both East and West who recognize in him the great charism of Teacher'.[42] The role of salesman is more difficult to assign, for Gladwell analyzes this role predominantly in terms of body language.[43] Salesmen have an uncanny ability to get their recipients to resonate with their emotional states. It is, indeed, impossible to assess Cassian's body language but he definitely possessed impressive communicative skills, as we saw in the context of his efforts as a connector. In addition, Stewart attributes to him not only great didactic qualities but also profound psychological insight, evident from, for instance, his exposition on friendship, which contains realistic accounts of anger and patience.[44]

4 The Stickiness of the Message: The Original Format of Cassian's *Conferences*

While it is crucial that messengers be well-connected, knowledgeable, and highly communicative, it is equally important that the content of the message be memorable, what Gladwell calls 'the stickiness of the message'.[45] This stickiness is predicated on the involvement of the audience, which can be reinforced by a set of—partly overlapping—characteristics. Messages, for instance, tend to be more memorable when they are presented in a narrative

40 Stewart 1998: 18–19.

41 Gladwell 2002: 59–74; esp. 67–68.

42 Stewart 1998: 130; cf. 37–39 ('Cassian's pedagogy' and 'Cassian the teacher'). Stewart interprets the elaborate and labyrinthine nature of Cassian's works in terms of his pedagogical genius: 'He knew that a teacher must keep returning to basic themes but must also keep them fresh and appealing. (…) Cassian revisits fundamental topics again and again, nuancing and developing his approaches' (1998: 37). This is corroborated by an illustration that references *Conference* 1 (1998: 38–39), a text discussed in Section 4 of this chapter.

43 Gladwell 2002: 74–87.

44 Stewart 1998: 33–34.

45 Gladwell 2002: 89–132.

and entertaining format. It is also crucial that the recipients of the message are invited to participate: such participation is facilitated when the content is personal and practical. Repetition also helps: when concepts, stories, and/or imperatives are repeated, they tend to stick in the mind more easily.[46]

All of this fits remarkably well with what we observe in Cassian's work. Especially his *Conferences* are original and unique as they present a combination of travel story, 'autobiography', anecdotes, and dialogue: Cassian clearly uses entertainment to instruct.[47] He draws the reader into the story of his journey, enlivening it by including discussion and short stories. In the *Conferences*, Cassian is the narrator, his friend Germanus poses questions, while the abba responds to these by offering his wisdom. The resulting conversation functions as didactic discourse concerning a particular religious topic. Thus, narrative and dialogue become vehicles of teaching. Let us consider *Conference* 1 as an example of how this works.[48]

From the outset it is clear that Cassian aims to involve his audience in his educational storytelling. To this end, he creates a narrative frame. In the opening paragraph he situates his message in space: the location is Scetis, the monastic settlement in the Egyptian desert. He also introduces the main characters of *Conference* 1: himself as narrator, Germanus his friend, and abba Moses. In the closing *caput*, Cassian returns to the narrative setting and in the final paragraph he includes some lively details; they lie down on the mats they were sitting on and their heads are supported by 'long slender packets … tied together with heavier papyrus stalks at foot-and-a-half-intervals'.[49] The author comments that these are also used as seats during the liturgy. We read how the monks prepare for sleep 'at once burning with joy as a result of the conference that had been given and excited by the prospect of the discussion that had been promised'.[50] This closing sentence exhibits another characteristic of Cassian's communicative strategy: the referencing of emotion, which draws the reader

46 Gladwell 2002: 92–98; 100; 118; 122–130.

47 While I view the combination of these elements as unprecedented, it must also be noted that Cassian's work is rooted in previously developed formats such as the dialogue and the *erôtapokriseis*, that is, question-and-answer literature. See Stewart 1998: 30, with references (at 160, n. 18) to, for instance, Hoffmann 1966 and Voss 1970. On *erôtapokriseis*, see Volgers and Zamagni 2004.

48 What follows is based on a close-reading analysis of *Conference* 1 (the scope of this contribution does not allow for inclusion of all its underpinning details that can be observed in the Latin text); see the edition by Petschenig (1886: 6–36); cf. also Ramsey 1997: 35–75.

49 Ramsey 1997: 64 (Latin: *embrimiis … quae crassioribus papyris in longos gracilesque fasciculos coactis sesquipedali intervallo pariter conligata … praestant*).

50 Ramsey 1997: 64 (Latin: *tam digestae conlationis inflammati gaudio quam repromissae disputationis expectatione suspensi*).

in. Whereas the final line of the conference speaks of joy, the opening section had referred to 'contrition of heart' (*cordis contritione*) and its accompanying emotional state of sadness: 'we were tearfully begging for an edifying word'.[51] Throughout the *Conference*, Cassian punctuates his narration with indications of emotion: they are amazed (*Conf.* 1.4.3: *obstupescentibus nobis*),[52] or 'stirred' (*Conf.* 1.9: *permoti*).[53] As the reader is drawn into the story by way of detailed narrative, (s)he is invited to share in the emotions of the characters.[54]

Another important tool to draw the reader in is the use of question-and-answer. All the conferences are styled as dialogues,[55] that often include large portions of monological teaching. Regularly, questions are posed to alert the reader: they are phrased in such a way that the reader can easily identify with the questioner, which makes the communication interactional. While questions are usually asked by Germanus, in *Conference* 1 the first one is posed by abba Moses: 'what is your goal and what is your end, which drives you to endure all these things so willingly?' (*Conf.* 1.2.3).[56] In this way, the theme of the conference is firmly put on the map: the objectives of the monastic life. In the course of the *Conference*, three additional questions are voiced by Germanus, in chapters 9, 12, and 16:[57] they break up the relatively long, monological sections and assist the student in staying connected to the train of thought.

Regarding the actual educational content of the *Conference*, the aims of the ascetic lifestyle, two additional observations must be made. First, many references to biblical material are included in the text.[58] These are sometimes

51 Ramsey 1997: 41 (*aedificationis sermonem fusis lacrimis posceremus*).

52 Ramsey 1997: 43.

53 Ramsey 1997: 48.

54 Cf. Clements 2020: 126–128.

55 See n. 47.

56 Ramsey 1997: 42 (… *quae sit destinatio vestra vel finis, qui ad haec omnia libentissime sustinenda vos provocat*). See also Stewart 1998: 38–39 ('An iIllustration: goals in monastic life'); cf. n. 42 and Schenk 2022: 278–294 ('Erstes und letztes Ziel').

57 Ramsey 1997: 48, 50, 56; in each case, the question covers more or less the entire *caput* taking up 10 lines (*Conf.* 1.9) and 6 lines (*Conf.* 1.12 and 1.16) in the edition.

58 For instance, Luke 10 in *Conf.* 1.8: the section on Martha and Mary. Many citations and allusions are included in *Conf.* 1.5, 1.9, 1.11–14, and 1.19–20; cf. Ramsey 1997: 65–66 for a list of 71 references (one of which is to an extracanonical gospel fragment). Some of these are discussed in 'Notes to the text' (Ramsey 1997: 67–75). It is important to note that the Bible is the bedrock of all (early) Christian literature: see, for instance, Young 1997. The topic of my dissertation was the biblical anchoring of the ascetic enterprise in early Christian hagiography (Vos 2003). In this contribution, in-depth discussion of such complicated intertextual referencing is left out as the focus lies elsewhere. Cf. also Schenk 2022: 220–248 ('Schriftauslegung und Schriftgebrauch').

repeated and elaborated on.[59] They also contain instances of direct speech, which results in the abba voicing authoritative statements originally made by Jesus; this adds weight to abba Moses' instructions (which, one could argue, mediate Cassian's own ideas).[60] The inclusion of authoritative—in this case biblical—texts as a means to persuade and legitimize is not mentioned by Gladwell but typical for the cultures of antiquity and vital to understanding successful change in Cassian's world.[61] Thus, from the field of late antiquity, this element of *auctoritas* ('authority') could be added to modern theories of diffusion of innovation to refine them.

Secondly, a number of guiding metaphors are introduced which aid the recipient of the argumentation to process the reasoning. The short-term and long-term goals of the monk, for instance, are compared to those of the farmer, the salesman, and the soldier (*Conf.* 1.2). Some of the imagery is discussed more in depth later in the discourse, when aiming at a target is illustrated by the throwing of a spear (*Conf.* 1.5). Another 'sticky' metaphor is that of money changing and the contrast between authentic and counterfeited coins (*Conf.* 1.20). It is striking that in order to expand on this particular imagery an anecdote is included which involves another famous Egyptian monk: John of Lycopolis (*Conf.* 1.21). Thus, the strong visual potential of metaphors is exploited, and even *enhanced* by the use of embedded narrative. This ingredient, so crucial to Cassian's mode of communication is present in Gladwell but not thematized as a separate element: the power of strong visuals and visualization.[62]

It is clear, then, that the *Conferences* are carefully constructed and exhibit all the qualities that contribute to create a 'sticky message': narrative composition, participatory elements, and instances of repetition.[63] Lively details and references to emotions, personal questions and anecdotes, authoritative texts

59 For instance, citations from 1 Corinthians 13 in *Conf.* 1.6 and 1.11; citation of Matthew 6:19 and 6:20 in *Conf.* 1.20 and 1.22 respectively.

60 For instance, in *Conf.* 1.8.2 (inclusion of direct speech from Luke 10:41–42) and *Conf.* 1.10.1, (Matthew 10:42 is cited including the words *Amen dico vobis*: 'amen, I say to you'); see Ramsey 1997: 48; cf. also the quotation from Luke 17 in *Conf.* 1.13.2 that again includes the emphatic speech *amen enim dico vobis*).

61 See, for instance, Otten and Salemink 2004, Young 2004, Clark 2004, and Williams 2008.

62 See, for instance, Gladwell 2002: 93–95 (the example of the 'gold box' as a visual cue in advertising), 96–98 (the significance of a geographical map in a case concerning public health), 99–132 (on using television for the acquisition of literacy skills).

63 Stewart 1998: 29; 37–39 (on repetition); see also 30–32, 'Relationships between the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*', and 32–35, 'Relationships among the *Conferences*'. Cf. Schenk 2022: 61–72 ('Die *Collationes* als erzählender Text: Eine Betrachtung unter narratologischen Gesichtspunkten'), 200–219 ('Lernen durch Erfahrung'), and 322 ('These V').

and metaphors all support the involvement of the audience in the communication, thus making the message memorable.

5 The Power of Context: Group Formation and Institutional Setting

The successful dissemination of ideas and products is not only dependent on good messengers and relevant messages: context is also a determining factor.[64] In *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell devotes a separate chapter to one particular aspect of context: group formation.[65] With Cassian in mind, it is important to note that Gladwell's chapter 5 includes various examples of such group formation in a religious setting, which I shall briefly summarize here. Gladwell interprets the success of both the apostle Paul and John Wesley in terms of group dynamics.[66] The success of Wesley's Methodist movement was largely determined by his organizational genius. While he traveled tirelessly, preaching wherever he came, he also formed a network of small groups that would meet regularly and adhere to a specific 'code of conduct'.[67] The identity of these groups was monitored and maintained. So Wesley was not only a classic connector in the sense that he knew a lot of people: he also knew a lot of groups, which greatly enhanced his scope for reaching people. Gladwell writes:

> Wesley realized that if you wanted to bring about a fundamental change in people's belief and behavior, a change that would persist and serve as an example to others, you needed to create a community around them, where those new beliefs could be practiced and expressed and nurtured.[68]

The reference to Paul and the rise of Christianity confirms that according to Gladwell such dynamics apply to antiquity as well.[69] I would claim that this same type of group formation is operative during the rise and spread of monasticism in the ancient world. Fundamentally, ascetic living is concerned with 'purity of heart' as Cassian would call it (see below in Section 6) but this

64 Gladwell 2002: 133–192.
65 Gladwell 2002: 169–192.
66 Gladwell 2002: 172–174.
67 Gladwell 2002: 172.
68 Gladwell 2002: 173.
69 See, for instance, Leyerle 2000 and Concannon 2017 (esp. 48–60: 'Early Christian assemblages and networks').

'ideology'[70] was always supported by concrete practices and embedded in a specific social setting.[71] Increasingly, this lifestyle of renunciation was practiced in the communal context of the monasteries. By implication, monasticism produced its own social and organizational structure that contributed to both the spread and maintenance of monastic ideals. A concrete example of this is the formation of the Pachomian monasteries mentioned earlier:[72] when Pachomius founded his monasteries, he developed a network of eleven monastic institutions that together formed the *Koinônia* ('Community'), with one monastery functioning as the leader of the others, thus creating a hierarchical structure.[73] At the top of the pyramid 'the "father" of the *Koinônia*' was located, while each monastery was headed by 'the "steward" (*oikonomos*)', who had 'a personal assistant (*deuteros*)'.[74] For our purposes, it is particularly relevant to note the levels of organization further down the hierarchy:

> Each monastery (…) was divided into 'houses'. Each house was headed by a 'housemaster' (*oikiakos*), who likewise had an assistant (*deuteros*). (…) For the average monk, the housemaster was at once supervisor and superior, teacher and spiritual father. The housemaster assigned work duties, gave permissions, judged conflicts, even pulled thorns from his men's feet.[75]

While the whole confederation of the Pachomian monasteries perhaps included 5,000 monks, with the individual institutions numbering circa 500 members each, these large numbers were broken down into smaller, workable units: each monastic settlement would maybe comprise 20 to 30 houses, with each house possibly containing 20–30 monks or nuns.[76] It is impossible to determine the exact numbers, but the main point is that group size was considered significant and monastic leaders were aware of the necessity to organize communities on the basis of the human dimension.[77] This focus on numbers resonates with Gladwell's notion of 'The magic number one hundred and

70 Gladwell 2002: 172.

71 See my explanation above in 'An Outline of Cassian's Life' (Section 2): the description of the monastic quest from both a spiritual and a practical perspective.

72 See Section 2.

73 Harmless 2004: 122, 125; Harmless draws an important parallel with the way Bernard of Clairvaux organized the Cistercian order in the Middle Ages. Cf. Lynch 1992: 199–206 ('The reformed Benedictines: Cistercians').

74 Harmless 2004: 126.

75 Harmless 2004: 126.

76 Harmless 2004: 125; there were two monasteries for women (Harmless 2004: 122).

77 Cf. Benedict who 'founded a dozen small houses, each with twelve monks'; Lynch 1992: 31.

fifty',[78] the maximum group size with the Hutterites, a religious group related to the Mennonites and the Amish.[79] Gladwell concludes: 'If we want groups to work as incubators for contagious messages, they have to be below 150'.[80] Crucial here is the observation that 'small close-knit groups have the power to magnify the epidemic potential of a message or idea'.[81] Cassian's monastic message was able to spread so rapidly because monasteries were founded concurrently. As the network of monastic institutions in the West expanded, becoming larger and increasingly stable, this provided an excellent pathway for the transmission of monastic ideologies such as Cassian's.

6 Cassian as Early Adopter and Innovator: The Translation Process

Subsequent to the three defining elements of communicator, message, and context,[82] Gladwell includes two chapters of case studies to refine his model.[83] The first of these addresses the 'power of translation' and discusses the bridge that is needed between innovation and (early) adoption. The author labels the innovators as 'the adventurous ones' and describes the early adopters as 'the opinion leaders in the community, the respected thoughtful people who watched and analyzed what those wild Innovators were doing'.[84] In my opinion, Evagrius of Pontus, Cassian's Origenian master in the Egyptian desert, was such a 'wild innovator'.[85] In his *Praktikos*, he developed an original system of eight vices which could be countered by eight virtues with the aim of reaching a state of *apatheia*, when the passions (*pathê*) were finally overcome.[86] He also designed a highly spiritualized, Origenistic theory of prayer, in which he

78 This is the subtitle of his chapter 5; Gladwell 2002: 169–192. The number derives from Dunbar 1992, and is commonly known as Dunbar's number. The biological basis for this number has been called into question, see Lindenfors et al. 2021, but the consideration of group size remains socially significant.

79 Gladwell 2002: 181.

80 Gladwell 2002: 182.

81 Gladwell 2002: 174.

82 Cf. Gladwell 2002: 15–29 (chapter 1: 'The three rules of epidemics').

83 Gladwell 2002: 193–215 (chapter 6); 216–252 (chapter 7).

84 Gladwell 2002: 193, 197.

85 For an excellent introduction to Evagrius' work, see Harmless 2004: 311–371 (chapter 10: 'Evagrius Ponticus: ascetical theory'; chapter 11: 'Evagrius Ponticus: mystical theology').

86 See, e.g., Harmless 2004: 346–350 (please note Figure 11.1: Evagrius' map of spiritual progress); references are to *Praktikos* 89 and *Gnostikos* 2 (cf. 2004: 364, nn. 5 and 6).

conceived of prayer as unceasing, imageless, and wordless.[87] Around the year 400, shortly after Evagrius' death in 399, the Origenistic Controversy broke out, in which those who adhered to an anthropomorphic view of the divine condemned the abstract inclinations of the Origenists.[88] This conflict shattered the monastic communities in Egypt and led to Cassian's and Germanus' flight to Constantinople.[89] Thus, Evagrius' innovative ideas were formally rejected but Cassian used them as the basis for his *Institutes* and *Conferences*, carefully omitting his master's name.[90]

While reworking Evagrius, Cassian had to translate literally from Greek into Latin but he also adapted his master's work for a wider audience. The successful messengers of a new message are translators: 'they take ideas from a highly specialized world and translate them into a language the rest of us can understand'.[91] They are intermediaries that explain, persuade, and connect: they are bridges.[92] Cassian was precisely such a bridging figure and is described in that capacity by Stewart: 'Several transliterations or translations of Greek are original to Cassian, a further witness to his role as a bridge between eastern and western monasticism'.[93]

The transition from 'invention'[94] to early adoption involves a process in which controversial, complicated, or unfamiliar elements are adapted to make them more mainstream and thus easier to digest.[95] This is what Cassian does when he brings Evagrius to the West: tweaking the message. One example concerns the aim of the monastic life, which Evagrius defined as *apatheia*. This Stoic term was taken over by some Christians,[96] but criticized by others.[97] Cassian decided to stay away from controversy and rendered the concept as 'purity of heart' (*puritas cordis*), thereby giving it a more biblical and monastic

87 Harmless 2004: 350–352 (references are to *Praktikos* 49, *De oratione* 66, and *De oratione* 70; cf. 2004: 364, nn. 24, 28 and 33).

88 Harmless 2004: 359–363. An important study of the Origenist Controversy is Clark 1992.

89 See Section 2 above: 'An Outline of Cassian's Life'.

90 Stewart 1998: 11–12 and Harmless 2004: 374, 376.

91 Gladwell 2002: 200.

92 Gladwell 2002: 200; 206.

93 Stewart 1998: 35. Cf. Clements 2020: 167, 177.

94 On the difference between 'invention' and 'innovation', see Castelli, this volume, General Introduction, Section 2.

95 Gladwell 2002: 200–203.

96 Cf., for instance, Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 14.4: Antony is described in Stoic terms as 'completely balanced, guided by reason (the *logos*) and in his natural state (*kata physin*)': Bartelink 1994: 174–175 (with explanatory footnote).

97 For instance, by Jerome; Stewart 1998: 42–43.

flavor.[98] Another case pertains to Cassian's theology of prayer. While Evagrius was ultimately a proponent of wordless prayer, his western counterpart develops a form of monologistic prayer. In his prayer practice Cassian employs a 'focusing technique':[99] he selects one Bible verse that has to be repeated continuously, thus effecting 'unceasing prayer'.[100] Psalm 70:1, 'O God make speed to save us; O Lord, make haste to help us' (*Deus in adiutorium meum intende; domine ad adiuvandum mihi festina*), later became one of the core elements of monastic liturgical prayer.[101] When we consider the wealth of biblical verses included by Evagrius in his *Antirrheticus* or *Talking back*, a book aimed at attacking demons by the recitation of biblical verse, Cassian's choice for simply one text is remarkable.[102] These two examples show that Cassian made monastic theology less academic and abstract (by changing *apatheia* into 'purity of heart'), more practical (by allowing the use of words), and simpler (by opting for one biblical verse).[103]

One last example demonstrates that there was a place for wordless prayer in Cassian too. Again, his ideas can be interpreted as an adaptation of Evagrius but they also reflect another spiritual tradition, highlighting Cassian's own genius. The case in point is the translation of what Evagrius calls *katastasis*.[104] In Evagrius' work this refers to the ultimate state that later medieval literature defined as *unio mystica*: when the soul communes with the divine in a state of pure peace. Cassian, however, speaks of *ekstasis*, a term avoided by Evagrius because it involved *excessus mentis*, a state of ecstasy. He combined it with an image lacking in Evagrius, fire: prayer may lead to a state of ecstasy that involves an experience of fire.[105] Where Evagrius focuses on *apatheia* and an ultimate control of the passions, Cassian moves towards descriptions that are more affective and visual. His 'ecstasy' is described in the emotional language of fiery love and joy derived from 'the Syrian tradition of the Pseudo-Macarian

98 Stewart 1998: 12, 28, 42–45; Harmless 2004: 389–391 (cf. Harmless on p. 389: 'Purity of heart is the lynchpin of *Conference* 1—indeed, of Cassian's monastic theology'; see, therefore, *Conference* 1 as a whole with explicit instances in e.g. *Conf.* 1.4, 1.5, and 1.10). Cf. also Clements 2020: 166 and Schenk 2022: 283–287 ('*Puritas cordis* und *caritas*').

99 Stewart 1998: 105.

100 Stewart 1998: 104; 110–113.

101 Harmless 2004: 394–396. The English translation here is from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.

102 Harmless 2004: 396: 'Where Evagrius gives 487 scripture verses to combat 487 demons, Cassian gives one scripture verse to combat all'.

103 Cf. also Stewart 1998: 43 ('Cassian tends to simplify Evagrius' schemata and to avoid his highly technical vocabulary'.).

104 Stewart 1998: 120.

105 Stewart 1998: 114–118; 120–121.

writings and kindred texts such as the Syriac *Book of Steps* (*Liber graduum*)'.[106] Here, we encounter Cassian's originality and his own take on what it means to be a monk.[107] His emotional and affective concerns are also evident in his discussion of the 'tears' accompanying ecstatic prayer.[108] So while 'Cassian the Bridge' was often translating and adapting the work of Evagrius to make it more accessible and acceptable, as an early adopter would, at times he took on the role of innovator as well, developing new and even controversial ideas in his own right.[109]

7 Reception History: Benedict's Rule, Gregory the Great, and the Irish Penitentials

In this section I shall highlight the success of Cassian's efforts by discussing a few examples of reception. We have seen how Cassian's work derives from a context in which monasticism was in its formative stages: institutions were founded and regulations ('rules') were composed. In the course of the fifth and sixth centuries a variety of rules were produced in the West, involving complex historical issues.[110] Like the study of Cassian's adaptations of Evagrius and his work as an innovative thinker, the composition of the rules and their modes of interdependence are fields of research in their own right. One example of Cassian's reception concerns the *Rule of the Master* (*Regula magistri*), dated to the 520s–530s,[111] an anonymous collection of monastic material: in it, the 'ten marks of humility' from *Institutes* 4 are expanded into 'twelve degrees of humility'.[112] This rule, in turn, deeply influenced the *Rule of Benedict* from the mid-sixth century,[113] which displays an extensive reception of Cassian: it emphasizes discipline, manual labor, and obedience, but also incorporates his views on prayer.[114] It is highly significant that Benedict mentions the works of

106 Stewart 1998: 115; 121–122.

107 See for this also Harmless 2004: 397–398, Casiday 2007: 161–214 (chapter 4 on Prayer), and Schenk 2022: 248–275 ('Gebet'), esp. 256–260 ('Das feurige Gebet') and 267–269 ('Das immerwährende Gebet').

108 Stewart 1998: 122–129.

109 Cf. Clements 2020: 181 ('Cassian shows sensitivity to both the stabilizing force of tradition and to the galvanizing force of human agency'.).

110 See, for instance, Dunn 2003 and Diem 2005.

111 Dunn 2003: 128.

112 Stewart 1998: 25.

113 Dunn 2003: 127.

114 Stewart 1998: 25, 113.

Cassian in the reading list he includes towards the end of his *Rule*,[115] thus contributing to the later practice of *lectio divina*, the meditative reading practice so typical of later medieval monasticism.[116] Because Charlemagne eventually chose the *Rule of Benedict* as the norm for monastic living,[117] this reading suggestion resulted in the *Institutes* and *Conferences* being read in monasteries, both communally and individually, until today.

A second instance of major reception concerns Gregory the Great (*c.*540–604), who adapted the list of eight vices to one of seven deadly sins: a model that became normative in the West.[118] In addition, he expanded Cassian's teaching on the active and the contemplative life as well as his views of compunction and prayer,[119] 'another example of how Cassian's bridging of East and West brought so much to later Latin monastic tradition'.[120]

A third case in point are the Irish Penitentials. In these books on penance from the British Isles, dated to the fifth–seventh centuries, sinfulness is not seen in terms of deadly sins that can only be repented from once and in public, but rather as a problem that has to be addressed on a personal level, repeatedly and in private. The controlling metaphor is derived from Cassian and comes from the world of medicine: sin is interpreted as a disease that has to be diagnosed and for which the proper medication has to be prescribed. The healing process is gradual: it involves individual concerns such as the notion of intent and progress sustained by privacy. This medical and mild approach was rooted in Cassian, who conceptualized the care of souls' (*cura animarum*)[121] on the basis of proper diagnosis and the right medication: eventually this medicinal approach would monasticize all dealings with penitents, that is, Cassian's monastic treatment of sin would become an integral part of the broader church tradition. In- and outside the monastery it replaced the harsher views of absolution from earlier traditions.[122]

Looking at these examples of reception,[123] we may conclude that the impact of Cassian's formative ideas was huge. This did not mean, however, that the

115 *Regula Benedicti* 73 (De Vogüé/Neufville 1972; English translation: White 2008); Harmless 2004: 373, 403.

116 Stewart 1998: 113.

117 Dunn 2003: 123.

118 *Moralia in Iob* 31.87 [45].

119 Stewart 1998: 25, 123, 125, 128–129, 179, n. 23.

120 Stewart 1998: 129.

121 Gladwell 2002: 206; Stewart 1998: 74 (*cura animae*); references are to *Inst.* 5.11.2, 10.8.2 and *Conf.* 5.4.3–6, 15.8 (cf. Stewart 1998: 183, n. 95).

122 O'Loughlin 2000: 93–111 (this reference pertains to the paragraph on the Irish Penitentials as a whole); see also Vos 2021: 248–256.

123 Another example of reception would be the influence of the desert tradition and Cassian on the Dominican Order: the Dominicans anchored their new religious ideals in the ancient traditions of desert asceticism; see Festa 2020 (the volume includes the edition of

movements he polemicized against were unsuccessful. On the contrary, the cult of the saints and a fascination with the miraculous would be on the forefront of many a medieval mind.[124]

8 Conclusion

I have presented a reading of Cassian's life and work through the lens of Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*, which enables us to identify important factors that contributed to his success as an agent of change who profoundly influenced the course of Christian monasticism in the West by anchoring it in the traditions of Egyptian, Origenistic, and Evagrian spirituality, thus making sure it became a movement that focused on ethics, spiritual formation, and regulated forms of practice.[125] It was shown that Cassian had a large network across the Mediterranean world. He was bilingual and a deacon, he undertook diplomatic missions and was well-connected to elite circles. He had also gained first-hand experience of monasticism, first in Palestine and later in Egypt. Together with his friend Germanus, he visited the monks of the delta and settled in Scetis. In addition, he imbibed the work of Evagrius, which became the creative well from which he drew when he composed his *Institutes* and *Conferences* decades later. It seems he was a born teacher, highly sensitive to what makes a great didactic work: narrative structure and personal details, emotion and repetition, compelling dialogue and authoritative texts, metaphors and anecdotes. In bringing eastern monasticism to the West, he was versatile at adapting Evagrius' thought to make it more accessible, while adding touches of his own. Regarding the distribution of his work, he could not only put his personal network to use but was also helped by the fact that the monastic world created its own institutional grid, thus aiding the quick spread of information. In later centuries this network continued to ensure that Cassian's writings were digested. His work, however, reached audiences beyond monastic walls as well. When all these aspects are taken into consideration, it is clear that Cassian scores high on all of Gladwell's counts: as communicator, both networker and maven, in terms of his message, which was memorable and layered, and thanks to institutional support. Based on the case study of Cassian, we might add explicitly

a thirteenth-century version of Cassian's *Institutes* in the vernacular). I thank one of the anonymous peer reviewers for this reference.

124 Dunn 2003: 90–91.

125 Cf. Clements 2020: 171–172 ('Bringing the desert to Gaul').

the elements of authority/legitimation and visual quality to the list of contributing factors.

Gladwell's study clarifies that surprising, radical change can be charted and understood. Certain elements are preconditions for transformation. Still, the process is not a matter of absolute causation and never a hard science. In Cassian's case, his objectives were supported by personality and experience, by genius and education, by the people he met and the recipients of his work. His aim was 'to bring the best of the eastern Christian world to the hungry monks of the western one'.[126] In doing so, he created a counterweight against the more sensationalist and anarchistic forms of monasticism he disliked. He succeeded to the extent that his model of balanced and long-term spiritual progress became in many ways the norm of the monastic enterprise. Miracles, however, would never be far from the medieval mind and the cult of the saints forged its own connections with the monastic world. But despite the abiding attraction of miracles and relics, Cassian consolidated forever the focus on prayer and moral improvement within Latin monasticism.[127] In the words of William Harmless: 'Cassian helped define its inner life, its mystical aspirations'.[128] When we consider the monastic landscape of this particular phase in history, a time of transition—especially in the western parts of the Roman Empire, we may conclude that there was no one like Cassian. He was one of a kind. He *bridged* the worlds of eastern and western asceticism as no one else could: a genius and creative mind that towered over his contemporaries and made a lasting mark on the history of Christian spirituality.[129]

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126 Stewart 1998: 130.

127 Cf. also Clements 2020.

128 Harmless 2004: 373.

129 Cf. Casiday 2007: 262–263 and Schenk 2022: 322 ('These 1: Johannes Cassian kommt eine immense Schlüssel- bzw. Scharnierfunktion zu. Er agiert als Mittler zwischen den verschiedensten theologischen und monastischen Traditionen und wird so zum Wegbereiter für das Mönchtum als Bildungsinstitution'.).

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CHAPTER 9

Greek-Latin Translation at the Court of Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–1455): The Agents That Changed the Humanist Translation Movement

Annet den Haan

1 Introduction

When Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–1455) ascended the papal throne, humanism put on the tiara, as one twentieth-scholarly elegantly put it.[1] Before becoming pope, Tommaso Parentucelli (b. 1397–1455) had already earned his spurs in humanist learning in the flourishing intellectual environment of the Florentine Republic. As Nicholas V, he laid the foundation for the Vatican library, and he became famous for his generous support of humanist learning at his court.[2]

Nicholas was especially interested in Latin translations of Greek texts. Greek-Latin translation had been practiced by Italian humanists since the beginning of the century, but the humanist translation movement rose to new heights during Nicholas' pontificate. Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459), one of the humanists who made translations for Nicholas, wrote about his patronage of translations in his biography of the pope (1455):

> Quid de traductionibus ac diversis novorum operum compilatoribus dicemus? Que quidem, traductoribus ac propriorum operum scriptoribus quasi certatim agentibus, cum suis salariis quisque pro virili parte ad operandum alliceretur, usque adeo creverunt, ut quinque ultimis fausti ac felicis pontificatus sui [sc. Nicolai] annis longe plura (ad hec presertim humanitatis studia, quorum amantissimus erat, pertinentia), quam quinque seculis antea totis centum predecessorum suorum temporibus composita ac traducta fuisse videantur.[3]

1 Garofalo 1946: 359: 'Con Tommaso Parentucelli da Sarzana (1397–1455), divenuto Papa nel 1447 col nome di Nicolò V, l'Umanesimo cinse la tiara'.

2 For the Vatican library under Nicholas V, see Manfredi 1994; 1998. Nicholas' literary patronage is discussed below in Section 3.

3 Manetti, *Vita Nicolai Quinti*, Book II, 22 (Modigliani 2005: 57–58).

> What shall I say about the translations and the various authors of new works? Since translators and authors of their own works more or less competed with one another, because each one was enticed by their salaries to work to the best of their ability, these works multiplied to the point that in the five final years of [Nicholas'] auspicious and fruitful pontificate, far more seems to have been composed and translated—especially works in the field of the humanities, which he loved very much—than in all the five centuries before in the times of one hundred predecessors.[4]

Nicholas' patronage did not only increase the production of Greek-Latin translations, it also changed the nature of the humanist translation movement, by turning it into a coordinated program. This chapter explores the changes that the humanist translation movement underwent in the late 1440s and early 1450s, and the agents that were responsible for these changes, focusing on the papal court under Nicholas V. Studying the humanist translation movement in terms of agents of change allows us to contextualize individual Greek-Latin translations made in this period: each translation is not only part of the scholarly career of the individual translator, but also of the collaborative and competitive environment of the papal court. Furthermore, this approach helps us to explain the success of the translation movement during Nicholas' pontificate, as well as its limitations. Although other patrons supported Greek-Latin translations in similar ways, Nicholas' case is particularly suited to illustrate the development of the humanist translation movement. It involved a variety of 'agents', as we will see below, and their activities are well documented through a substantial number of translations and prefaces, all written within a short period of time. For the discussion that follows, I have consulted 24 prefaces to translations dedicated to Nicholas. Alongside the prefaces, my analysis is based on biographical writings and letters in which his patronage of translations is discussed.

2 Change in Humanist Greek-Latin Translation

The practice of translating Greek texts into Latin did not begin with the pontificate of Nicholas V, nor did it begin with the humanist movement. Greek-Latin translations had already been made in antiquity—Cicero famously translated Demosthenes' speech *Pro Ctesiphonte*, as well as the speech of his opponent Aeschines—and medieval scholars also translated Greek texts, especially the

4 Unless otherwise stated, all translations of quoted passages are my own.

Aristotelian corpus.[5] However, the number of new Greek-Latin translations went up significantly in fifteenth-century Italy.[6] There are several explanations for this sudden explosion. One is the emergence of the humanist movement, which aimed to restore the glory of antiquity through the imitation of classical examples. That the ancient Romans had read and imitated the Greek classics was a compelling reason for the Italian humanists to do the same. Early humanists such as Petrarch (1304–1374) made attempts to master Greek, albeit with limited success.[7] This emerging desire to learn Greek was further stimulated by the arrival of Greek scholars who brought their learning and their books with them. Connections between Italy and the Greek-speaking Byzantine empire were strengthened by the threat of the Ottoman Turks, who eventually captured Constantinople in 1453. The council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1445), which was meant to bring about a reconciliation of the Catholic and Orthodox Church in the face of the Ottoman threat, led to new encounters between Italian humanists and Byzantine scholars.[8] In this context, humanists such as Leonardo Bruni (*c.*1370–1444) and Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) became prolific translators. In the 1420s, Bruni authored a treatise on translation theory, informed by humanist standards of good Latin and stylistic imitation of the classics.[9] All these translations set the stage for Nicholas' patronage of translation.

Before becoming pope, Nicholas had already shown an interest in book collections: he had authored a library canon for the foundation of the public library in Florence, and he had encouraged his learned friends to translate Greek texts into Latin.[10] After ascending the papal throne, he became a generous patron of humanist learning, investing especially in books and translations. The Florentine book-seller and biographer Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–1498) wrote about Nicholas' patronage:

> Venne alla Sedia Apostolica grandissimo numero di danari, et per questo cominciò il papa a edificare in più luoghi et mandare per libri et greci et latini, in ogni luogo donde ne potè avere, non guardando a pregio ignuno.

5 Cicero's translations have not survived. For cases of Greek-Latin translation from various periods, see Glucker and Burnett 2012.

6 For an overview of the humanist translation movement, see Gualdo Rosa 1985.

7 See, e.g., Fera 2016.

8 See, e.g., Gill 1959.

9 Bruni, *De interpretatione recta*. Latin text with Italian translation in Viti 2004. For Bruni and his translations, see also Hankins 1994; Hankins 2001.

10 For the library canon, see Blasio et al. 1984. Nicholas encouraged Poggio Bracciolini to translate Xenophon *De Cyri Vita*. See below, Section 3.

> Condusse moltissimi scrittori, de' più degni poteva avere, a' quali dava a scrivere di continovo. Condusse moltissimi uomini docti, et a comporre opere di nuovo, et a tradurre de' libri non ci fusino, dando loro grandissime provisioni, sì provisioni ordinarie et il simile istraordinarie, che tradotto l' opere, quando gliele portavano, dava loro buona quantità di danari, aciochè facessino più volentieri quello avevano a fare. Dava assai provisioni a uomini dotti. Congregò grandissima quantità di libri in ogni facultà, così greci come latini, in numero di volumi cinquemilia.[11]
>
> A huge amount of money came to the Apostolic See, and with this the pope began to build in multiple places and send for books in Greek and Latin, from wherever he could get them, not caring for the price at all. He gathered many writers, the best he could get, and he made them write continuously. He gathered many learned men, to write new works, and to translate books that had not been translated yet, and he provided for them very generously, both by supporting them in the ordinary way, and by giving them extraordinary rewards, because when they finished translating a work and brought it to him, he gave them a good sum of money, so that they carried out their tasks all the more willingly. He gave ample provisions to the learned men. He gathered an enormous number of books in all disciplines, Greek as well as Latin, 5,000 volumes in number.

Nicholas V was not the only patron who supported and rewarded translators. His predecessor, Eugenius IV (r. 1431–1447), had also attracted humanist translators to his court.[12] His contemporary Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon (r. 1416–1458) and Naples (r. 1442–1458) sponsored translators as well.[13] However, it seems that dedicating translations to Nicholas was particularly lucrative. During his pontificate, the number of translations dedicated to Alfonso decreased, which suggests that translators preferred Nicholas as a patron.[14] Furthermore, translation patronage was something Nicholas was famous for: translators who dedicated their work to him often referred

11 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *La vita di Nicolao P.P.V.* (Greco 1970: 63). For Nicholas' literary patronage, see Giorgi 1742: 175–204; Voigt 1859: 355–360; Pastor 1891: II, 193–214.

12 For Eugenius' support of humanists at his court, see McCahill 2013: 45–70.

13 For Alfonso's patronage of humanism, and humanist translations, see Bentley 1987: 51–62, 84–137; Ryder 1990: 314–330.

14 For an overview of the translations dedicated to Alfonso, see Botley 2004a: 136–137.

to his patronage in their prefaces, praising him explicitly for his translation program.[15]

Nicholas' initiatives had several consequences for how humanists practiced Greek-Latin translation. First of all, the environment of his court consolidated a movement that was already in existence. Translators who dedicated their work to him continued earlier humanist discussions on translation method. In their prefaces, they referred to the ideal of translating *ad sensum* ('according to the sense') rather than *ad verbum* ('word for word'); to observe the style of the Greek original and echo this in Latin; and to avoid barbarisms and solecisms.[16] Niccolò Perotti (1429–1480), in the preface to his translation of Polybius (before 1454), wrote about the aim of his translation: to present a Latin text to the reader that was so fluent that it would seem Polybius himself had become a Roman:[17]

> quod non mediocrem me apud nostros homines gloriam consecuturum sperabam, si mea opera tam praeclarus auctor ex peregrino aliquando Romanus factus esset et omissa gentili lingua latine loqui didicisset.[18]
>
> [It was a great pleasure to translate Polybius,] because I hoped that I would win considerable renown among our people, if through me a writer of his great fame would not remain a foreigner, but at some point had become Roman and, giving up his native language, had learned to speak Latin.

At Nicholas' court, the humanist translation movement advanced further, with a prominent role for the connection with Byzantium and its scholarly tradition. The downfall of the Byzantine Empire not only led to an influx of Greek scholarship in Italy but also added an incentive to study Greek and to translate Greek texts into Latin. Italian humanists felt that the time had now come for Rome and its intellectuals to preserve the Greek literary tradition. This

15 E.g., Decembrio in the preface to his translation of Appian's *Historia Romana* (ca. 1456); Gaza in the prefaces to his translations of Theophrastus' *De causis plantarum* (1451) and Aristotle's *Problemata* (1452); Guarino in the preface to his translation of Strabo's *Geographica* (before 1455); George of Trebizond in the prefaces to his translations of Cyril's commentary on John (1448 or 1449) and Plato's *De legibus* (1451).

16 For humanist translation methods, see e.g., Gualdo Rosa 1985; Berti 1988; Cortesi 1995; Pade 2018; 2020.

17 For this translation, see e.g., Reynolds 1954; Milne 1989; Pade 2008 and Charlet 2011. For its printed editions, see Cortesi and Fiaschi 2008: 11, 1609–1611.

18 Latin text and translation quoted from Pade 2016: 7, with modifications.

ideal, which had motivated Manuel Chrysoloras (1355–1415) to teach Greek in Florence two generations earlier, was now put into practice.[19] Nicholas aimed to make Rome a new center of learning, and to transform it into the cultural and intellectual, as well as the spiritual, capital of the Christian world. In one of his prefaces addressed to Nicholas V, Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) described Greek-Latin translation as an act of conquest, meant to bring the Greek literary heritage under Roman dominion:

> Quod Eneas apud Virgilium, Nicolae Quinte summe pontifex, id ego nunc possum dicere et, quia carmen est, etiam decantare: 'iuvat evasisse tot urbes Argolicas mediosque viam tenuisse per hostes' [*A.* 3.282–283]. Nam ex Argolicis urbibus atque ex mediis hostibus evasisse mihi videor, militia iam quam mihi imperaveras perfunctus. Etenim quemadmodum romani olim imperatores, qualis Augustus Antoninus aliique permulti (tua dignitas facit ut hac utar comparatione), Rome considentes ac per sese urbana negotia procurantes, bella presertim peregrina ducibus demandabant, ita tu, cum sacra, religionem, divina atque humana iura, pacem, amplitudinem, salutem latini orbis per teipsum cures, mandasti cum alia aliis tum vero nobis, quasi tuis prefectis, tribunis, ducibus, utriusque lingue peritis, ut omnem, quoad possemus, Greciam tue ditioni subiiceremus, id est ut grecos tibi libros in latinum traduceremus.[20]
>
> Like Aeneas in Virgil, highest Pontiff Nicholas V, I can now say—and because it is in verse, even chant: 'what joy to have escaped so many Argive towns and to have kept my direction through the midst of foes' [*A.* 3.282–283]. I do feel as if I had escaped from Argive towns and from the midst of foes, having now finished the campaign you ordered me to embark upon. Residing in Rome to oversee the affairs of the city themselves, Roman emperors such as Augustus, Antoninus Pius, and many others used to delegate foreign wars, in particular, to their commanders. Like them—your dignity makes me use that comparison—you yourself attend to worship, holy ceremonies, divine and secular law, peace, wealth, and the welfare of the Latin world. Others were assigned different missions, but, as if we were your prefects, or tribunes or commanders, those of us with a mastery of both languages were ordered to bring as

19 On Chrysoloras' vision, see Thomson 1966; Hankins 2002; and Pade 2017.

20 Preface to Valla's translation of Thucydides (1452). Latin text and translation quoted, with modifications, from Pade 2016: 3.

> much as possible of Greece under your rule, that is to translate Greek books into Latin for you.

In this passage, Valla describes translation in terms of appropriation: Greece is brought under the rule of Rome. His words also illustrate another effect of Nicholas' patronage of translation. The humanist translation movement, which had begun as the interests and activities of individuals such as Bruni and Traversari, now became a coordinated program. By comparing translation to a military campaign, Valla presented Nicholas' patronage as strategic. The pope sent out his translators to conquer Greek literature, one text at a time. As we will see below, Valla's military metaphor is more than just rhetoric. Nicholas' influence went beyond merely financially supporting the humanists in their activities of translation: he selected Greek texts for translation, assigned them to translators, provided Greek source texts, and practiced quality control.[21]

One implication of this coordination is that translation became much more competitive. Because Nicholas' vision for the library was ultimately to build a complete set of classical works, translations that were already in existence did not need to be made again. As a consequence, the translation program was a 'zero-sum game': a job given to one translator meant an opportunity lost for another. We will see below that the presence of other translators stimulated Nicholas' clients to distinguish themselves and to discredit their competitors.

Furthermore, the focus on new translations—translations of Greek texts not yet available in Latin—discouraged humanists to try their hand at translation as a stylistic exercise. For humanists such as Bruni, Greek-Latin translation was not only a matter of making Greek texts available to Latin readers; it was also a form of literary imitation.[22] The most popular source text for Greek-Latin translation as a stylistic exercise was Demosthenes' *Pro Ctesiphonte*, which was first translated by Bruni in imitation of Cicero, and then translated six more times by humanists in the fifteenth century.[23] Two of these translations were made by George of Trebizond (1396–1472/3) and Lorenzo Valla, who both worked as translators for Nicholas V. However, they did not dedicate their translations of

21 For an interpretation of this metaphor in the context of humanist translation, see also Pade 2020: 59.

22 In his work on Renaissance Greek-Latin translation, Paul Botley distinguishes three 'Renaissance translation categories': translations to replace the original; translations to compete with the original or with other translations; and translations to help the reader understand the Greek (Botley 2004b: 164–177). Botley covers a wider time span, but he mentions examples for all three types from the fifteenth century.

23 For the reception of Demosthenes in the fifteenth century, including translation as stylistic imitation, see Tangri 2006: 548–571 and Monfasani 1976: 61–68.

Pro Ctesiphonte to the pope, which suggests that such stylistic retranslations had no place in his translation program.[24]

Ultimately, the ideal of building a complete set of classical texts would in itself become a limiting factor: once all important texts had been translated, the movement would die out. According to George of Trebizond, some people in his day believed that all of Aristotle's works had already been translated into Latin, and that it was no longer necessary to make new translations. He argued against this view himself, but it is clear that it must have been held by others.[25]

3 The Patron

Now that we have explored how the humanist translation movement changed under Nicholas V, we can have a closer look at the agents who contributed to this transformation. The most obvious agent of change is of course Pope Nicholas V himself. Nicholas did not only sponsor and support Greek-Latin translation; he was also actively involved in the process. The translators who worked for him pointed this out in their prefaces. Addressing the pope, George of Trebizond wrote in the preface to his translation of Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on John:[26]

> Idcirco etiam e Greca in Latinam linguam traductioni et studuisti et studes; et, ut quam eloquenter vertantur procuras, imo examini tuo subiicis, et probe translata retines, alia proiicis. Ita et quibus Latini carent, ea Latine tu legi facis, et quibus non carent, ea ne barbara videantur, sedulo prestas.[27]
>
> Therefore also you have dedicated yourself, and dedicate yourself now, to translation from Greek into the Latin language; and to ensure that these texts are translated as eloquently as possible, you subject them to your

24 The dating of these translations is uncertain, but Monfasani dates Valla's translation to after 1455 on the grounds that it was not dedicated to Nicholas V (Monfasani 1976: 64). However, Valla could also have made the translation earlier and simply not dedicated it to Nicholas. Lo Monaco dates Valla's translation to 1434 (Lo Monaco 1986: 142). George's translation, which was probably made in the 1440s, was not dedicated to Nicholas V either, but to King Alfonso of Naples (Monfasani 1976: 64–65).

25 Monfasani 1976: 61.

26 For this translation, see Monfasani 1984: 293–298 and 715–717. For its printed editions, see Cortesi and Fiaschi 2008: I, 391–393.

27 George of Trebizond, preface to Cyril of Alexandria, *Super evangelium Iohannis*, 1448 or 1449 (Monfasani 1984: 296).

> deep scrutiny, and you preserve what has been properly translated, but the rest you throw out. This way, what the Latins do not have can be read in Latin because of you, and as for what they do have, you take care to guarantee that that does not seem barbarian.

George described Nicholas as the mastermind behind the translation program. Of course, translators would make such comments for rhetorical reasons: by presenting the patron as an expert, they added to his prestige, thereby increasing the value of their dedication, and improving the patronage relationship. However, there are several indications that such comments were more than just flattery.

First, most of the dedicatory letters addressed to Nicholas V emphasize that the translation had been made at the pope's request. For example, Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459) wrote about his translation of Diodorus Siculus:[28]

> Nam cum prius hortatu tuo Xenophontem *De Cyri vita* Latinis legendum tradidissem, et hos quoque sex Diodori Siculi libros (…) traducendi munus te instante suscepi.[29]
>
> For as I had earlier translated Xenophon's *Life of Cyrus* into Latin, at your request, I have also taken upon myself the task to translate these six books of Diodorus Siculus, at your sollicitation.

Guarino Veronese (1374–1460) wrote about his translation of Strabo's *Geographica*:[30]

> Eum [sc. Strabonem] tuae sanctitatis tractatus imperio in latinum vertere conatus sum, non tam meo in tenui ingenio quam mandantis gravitate fretus.[31]

28 For this translation, see Cohen-Skalli and Marcotte 2015; Monfasani 2016: 94–105. For its printed editions, see Cortesi and Fiaschi 2008: I, 414–416.

29 Poggio Bracciolini, preface to his translation of Diodorus Siculus, *Biblioteca historica*, 1449. For the text of the preface, see Monfasani 2016: 95–96 (here at 96).

30 For this translation, see Diller 1971: 255–230 and Fryde 1983: 55–83. Diller does not give a date for the translation, but the dedicatory letter addressed to Nicholas V must have been written before the Pope's death in March 1455. For the printed editions of this translation, see Cortesi and Fiaschi 2008: II, 1653–1656.

31 Guarino Veronese, preface to Strabo, *Geographica* (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [hereafter, BAV], Pal.lat.1360, fol. 3r).

> I have tried to translate him [Strabo] into Latin, led by the command of Your Holiness; trusting not so much in my own humble talent as in the dignity of him who commands me.

Lorenzo Valla wrote about his translation of Thucydides' *Historiae* (1452):[32]

> At cur sumpsisti hoc opus, quidam inquiunt? Ego vero non sumpsi sed accepi, nihil minus quam mea sponte sumpturus. At cur accepisti? Nempe quod imperatoris mei detractare imperia, sanctissimi alioquin et sapientissimi viri, nefas esse ducebam.[33]
>
> And why—some have said—have you taken this work upon yourself? I have not taken it upon myself, but agreed to do it; far be it from me that I would take it upon myself on my own account. And why have you agreed to do it? Obviously because I believed it was unthinkable to refuse the orders of my commander, who is as wise a man as he is holy.

Of course, translators may have exaggerated Nicholas' role in order to flatter him, or perhaps, as in the cases of Guarino and Valla, to stress their own humility. However, it is unlikely that they would write about a request from the pope if there was no foundation for it. Although there are examples of translations that were dedicated to Nicholas spontaneously, this did not happen as a rule.[34] Several translations were not dedicated to Nicholas even though they were made by humanists who had a relationship of patronage with him. George of Trebizond, before entering Nicholas' service as a translator, had planned translations for Aristotle's books on natural philosophy. Some of these translations were made, but they were not dedicated to the pope, and for others it remains unclear if they were made at all.[35] Such cases suggest that translators who worked for Nicholas could not simply follow their own inclinations, because the patron was selective as to the translations he rewarded.

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32 On this translation, see e.g., Pade 2016 and Regoliosi 2001. For its printed editions, see Cortesi and Fiaschi 2008: II, 1682–1684.

33 Lorenzo Valla, preface to Thucydides, *Historiae* (BAV, Vat.lat.1801, fol. 1v).

34 Rinuccio Aretino, for example, dedicated three translations to Nicholas. He indicated in his prefaces that he translated these texts on his own initiative, and that the dedications were unexpected in each case: his translation of Pseudo-Aristotle's *De mundo* (1449), letters of Hippocrates (1449–1450), and letters of Brutus (1450). For Aretino's translations, see Lockwood 1913.

35 For George's plan to translate Aristotle's books on natural philosophy, see Monfasani 1976: 55–59. See also the translations of Demosthenes' *Pro Ctesiphonte* mentioned above, Section 2.

A further indication of Nicholas' involvement is that in several cases, he provided the source text for the translation, either from his own collection, or through his network. For example, he provided the Greek manuscript for the translation of Strabo's *Geographica*.[36] He gave Poggio Bracciolini a Greek text for his translation of Diodorus Siculus.[37] The translations of George of Trebizond were based on sources from the library of Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472), a close associate of the pope.[38] Niccolò Perotti tried to borrow a copy of Polybius from the papal library for his translation.[39] Nicholas himself tried to borrow a manuscript of Philo Iudaeus from Giannozzo Manetti, who had then not yet moved to the papal court, and who had a copy in his library in Florence.[40] These examples suggest that even if translations were not commissioned directly, translators did not take up translation projects independently. Rather, the pope and the translator agreed on the project before the work was commenced, or the patron was at least aware of the project at an early stage.

The third indication of Nicholas' active role is that he influenced the translation process itself. Translators often described their method in their prefaces, which suggests that Nicholas was interested in such matters.[41] In one case, he interfered directly. He gave instructions to George of Trebizond for his translation of Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* (1448/1449).[42] In the preface to this translation, George explained that he had left out some doctrinally problematic passages at the pope's request. Addressing the pope, he wrote:

> Quare sentibus tuo iussu amputatis, rosas solummodo Latinis hominibus hac traductione obtulimus.[43]
>
> Therefore, having cut away the thorns by your order, I have brought only the roses to the Latin readers through this translation.

36 Diller 1971: 226 and Fryde 1983: 76. For this translation, see also above, n. 30.

37 Monfasani 1976: 69–70. For the Greek manuscripts, see also Monfasani 2016: 94–95.

38 The sources for Aristotle's *De animalibus* belonged to Bessarion's library (Monfasani 1984: 706–707), as did the ones for Ptolemy's *Almagest* (Monfasani 1984: 749–750). For Bessarion's role, see also below, Section 4.

39 Reynolds 1954: 116. For Perotti's translation of Polybius, see also above, n. 17.

40 Manetti wrote two letters about this manuscript (Wittschier 1968: 43–45). One of them is addressed to Tortelli, Nicholas' librarian; the other one is addressed to Nicholas himself.

41 See above, Section 2.

42 For the translation, see Monfasani 1984: 721–726; for the preface to Nicholas V, see Monfasani 1984: 291–293. For the printed editions of George's translation, see Cortesi and Fiaschi 2008: 1, 476–479.

43 Monfasani 1984: 292.

In this case, Nicholas may have been more involved than usual, because of the exceptional nature of the work. His interference was usually less obvious, but we know that he was critical about the translations dedicated to him, and that he even asked for a second opinion in some cases. For example, he asked Regiomontanus (1436–1476) to review George of Trebizond's commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest*.[44]

4 The Intellectual Network

Apart from Nicholas V, the translators themselves contributed to the transformation of the translation movement. Although they responded to the pope's wishes and expectations, their role was not passive. They actively competed for the patron's favor by building alliances and discrediting competitors, being aware that it was a privilege to be selected as a translator for a project. Perotti wrote about his translation of Polybius' *Historiae*:[45]

> Absolvi tandem aliquando delegatum mihi abs te munus, Pontifex maxime, conversis in latinum sermonem quinque libris Polibii, qui soli nobis superstites ex amplissima illius historia remansere. […] Tibi vero ingentes ago gratias, agamque dum vivam, quod me unum ex multis cui hoc munus delegares elegisti.[46]
>
> I have finally acquitted myself of the task that was once entrusted to me by you, Holy Father, having translated into Latin the five books of Polybius, the only ones we have left of that author's extended *Histories*. I offer you my greatest thanks, and I will as long as I live, because you chose me, one among many to whom you could have entrusted this task.

At Nicholas' court, translators were each other's colleagues and rivals, shaping each other's works as readers, assistants, and critics. For example, Giannozzo Manetti worked on a new Latin translation of the New Testament, using Valla's *Annotationes Novi Testamenti*.[47] The translation of Strabo's *Geographica*, which has been mentioned above, was made by Guarino Veronese

44 Monfasani 1976: 104–109. George's translation of Eusebius was criticized by Andrea Contrario. Monfasani 1976: 127 and Monfasani 1984: 108–109.

45 For Perotti's translation of Polybius, see also above, n. 17.

46 Perotti, preface to Polybius, *Historiae* (BAV, Pal.lat.911, fol. 1r.).

47 Den Haan 2016: 48–58.

and Gregorius Tiphernas (1414–1462). The work was commissioned by Nicholas V, and the text was divided among the two translators, with Guarino working on books I–X, and Tiphernas working on books XI–XVII. However, each translator competed with the other by trying his hand at the books not assigned to him.[48] When Nicholas commissioned a translation of Diodorus Siculus from Poggio Bracciolini, Poggio asked George of Trebizond for help, but the two translators would become rivals a few years later.[49]

The competition at Nicholas' court is best illustrated by the career of George of Trebizond. After rendering seven Greek works into Latin for Nicholas, George lost the favor of the pope in 1452, first by refusing to make more translations for him, and finally by leaving the papal court for Naples.[50] Although George made several attempts to return to Nicholas' service, he was ultimately unsuccessful. The main cause for his dismissal was a coordinated attack on his credibility by his competitors at the curia, specifically criticism of his commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest* and his translation of Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica*.[51] Just before he left the papal court, George had been working on a translation of Aristotle's *Problemata*, at the request of the pope.[52] The same text was translated shortly afterwards by his rival Theodore Gaza (ca. 1410–1475). It is unclear if Nicholas asked Gaza to make this translation. In the preface, Gaza presents it as his own idea, inspired by the translations that others dedicated to Nicholas.[53] What is clear, however, is that Gaza's translation replaced George's. Although George would eventually complete his own translation of the *Problemata*, this would never become as popular with readers as Gaza's, and it was completely overshadowed by Gaza's translation in the printed version.[54] In other words, the competitive network of translators partly determined which translations were made, and how successful they were with readers.

Besides the patron and the competitive peer group of translators, some of the cardinals at Nicholas' court also contributed to the translation program. They functioned both as social and as literary intermediaries. Cardinal Antonio De la Cerda (1390–1459) was the inspiration for several of

48 Diller 1971: 226. For this translation, see also above, n. 30.

49 Monfasani 1976: 69–71; Monfasani 2016: 94. Pier Candido Decembrio also began a translation of Diodorus Siculus. See also n. 67.

50 Monfasani 1976: 104–112.

51 See above, n. 42.

52 Monfasani 1976: 74–75. For the later controversy between George and Gaza about the *Problemata* translations, see Monfasani 1976: 152–156.

53 BAV, Vat.lat.2111, fol. 1v.

54 Monfasani 1999.

Rinuccio Aretino's translations.[55] Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) is associated with George of Trebizond's translation of Plato's *Parmenides* and with Lorenzo Valla's *Annotationes Novi Testamenti*.[56] The most important figure in this respect was Cardinal Bessarion. Bessarion contributed to the translation program by inviting translators to Rome, accommodating them in his own house, providing Greek source texts for their translations, and giving input on learned questions.[57] For example, Bessarion introduced George of Trebizond to Pope Eugenius IV. He authored a preface to George's translation of St. Basil's *Contra Eunomium* and *De spiritu sancto* (1442), in which he praised George's skills as a translator:[58]

> Cuius [sc. Basilii] oratio cum tantam vim ac dignitatem possideat, ut difficile sit in lingua graeca gravius aliquid aut elegantius invenire, per hominem non modo paternae et graecae, sed etiam latinae linguae peritissimum Georgium Trapezuntium, virum sane elegantissimum, ac disertissimum, tuaeque sanctitati deditum, feci transferri.[59]
>
> And because his [Basil's] speech possesses so much force and dignity that it would be difficult to find anything weightier and more elegant in the Greek language, I had it translated by a man who is not only thoroughly skilled in his native language, Greek, but also in the Latin language; George of Trebizond, a man with the right degree of taste and fluency, and devoted to Your Holiness.

Bessarion also invited Valla to Rome, and made suggestions for his *Annotationes Novi Testamenti*, as Valla pointed out himself in one of his writings:

> Nam Cardinalis Nicenus, vir de me optime meritus, et qui, ut Romam venirem, mihi autor extitit, habet in opere meo partem: quippe qui illud,

55 On Rinuccio's translations dedicated to Nicholas V, see above, n. 34. Rinuccio dedicated his translation of Aesop (1448) to De la Cerda, after considering dedicating it to Nicholas V. For the dates of this translation and the dedication to De la Cerda, see Lockwood 1913: 55–56. The translation of Aristotle's *De mundo* (1449) was encouraged by Cardinal De la Cerda; Lockwood 1913: 56, and 76–78.

56 For the *Parmenides* translation, see Monfasani 1976: 167–170. For Cusa's interest in Valla's *Annotationes*, see Camporeale 1972: 365–369.

57 On Bessarion, see e.g. Mohler 1967, Monfasani 1995, Märtl et al. 2013, and Monfasani 2021. For Bessarion's library, see Labowsky 1979.

58 For this translation, see Abenstein 2014 and 2015. See also Monfasani 1976: 47–49 and Monfasani 1984: 160–161.

59 This letter is edited in Mohler 1967: III, 450–452, citation on 451.

> cuius supra feci mentionem: Sic eum volo manere, quid ad te? [John 21:22] quod ego non animadverterem, ut adderem, admonuit.[60]
>
> For the Cardinal of Nicea [i.e. Bessarion], a man who has treated me very well, and on whose advice I came to Rome, has a part in my work, for it was he who suggested that I would add what I referred to above, *Sic eum volo manere, quid ad te?* [John 21:22], which I did not observe.[61]

In the preface to his Thucydides translation, Valla expressed his disappointment that Bessarion was absent from Rome at the time, having been sent to Bologna by the pope, which meant that he could not help with the translation as expected.[62]

Finally, one could argue that there were non-human agents that shaped the humanist translation movement. The newly founded Vatican library created a demand for books, shaping the pope's vision of a universal collection, and inspiring the patron and his intellectual circle to produce new translations.[63] Similarly, when the printing press came to Rome in the 1460s, it influenced the type of texts that were produced and preserved, including editions and translations of classical texts. The transition from manuscript to print acted as a filter, favoring the later reception of some translations over others, as in the case of George and Gaza's translations of Aristotle's *Problemata* mentioned above. In other words, the literary infrastructure in fifteenth-century Rome both facilitated and shaped the translation movement. In this case, these non-human agents initially were dependent on human ones, being the product of their vision and activities. However, once they were in place, they began to serve as an organizational principle in their own right.

On a final note, the translation movement also had its limitations. Although the aim of the translation program was to make texts available to a wide Latin readership, the pope sometimes kept translations to himself, to be read only by him, or by a small circle of intimates. George of Trebizond complained in a letter to Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454) that he had no copy of his own translation of Chrysostom (1448), because the pope kept the dedication copy to himself, and did not let it circulate.[64] He wrote that this was the case with all of his (George's) translations:

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60 Valla, *Antidotum IIII* (Garin 1962: I, 340). Bessarion wrote to Valla in October 1453 to praise the *Annotationes* (Camporeale 1972: 389–390).

61 For the textual problem to which Valla refers here, see Monfasani 1976: 90–102.

62 BAV, Vat.lat.1801, fol. 1v.

63 For the Vatican library under Nicholas V, see above, n. 2.

64 For George's translation, see Monfasani 1984, 729–744 (Text CLXXXII).

> Dominus autem noster nemini unquam nec Chrysostomum, nec aliud a me Sanctitati Suae opus dedicatum tradere transcribendum voluit, quod cur faciat, ignoro.[65]
>
> Our Lord [the pope] has never wished to hand over to anyone for transcription either Chrysostomus or any other work dedicated by me to His Holiness. Why he does this, I do not know.[66]

Because of Nicholas' generous support, translators became dependent on him. When he died in 1455, some projects were aborted: Pier Candido Decembrio (1399–1477) had been working on a translation of Diodorus Siculus, to complement Poggio's translation of the earlier books.[67] He abandoned the project, and dedicated the part that had been completed to King Alfonso of Naples.[68] Similarly, Giannozzo Manetti, who had planned to translate the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek, never finished his work. Manetti wrote in his biography of Nicholas v that the pope's death had interrupted his progress.[69]

After 1455, the translators Nicholas had employed tried to find support at other Italian courts, dedicating their translations to other princes, with varying success. For most of these translators, making a Greek-Latin translation would never again be so lucrative. After Nicholas' death, Theodore Gaza wrote a letter to Cristoforo Persona (1416–1486) about the incentive for taking up a new translation project, now that the most obvious patron was no more:

> At dices non esse illa nunc exposita praemia quae Nicolaum pontificem narras proposuisse, nec tales nunc principes qui eius vestigia consectentur. Cur ergo tantum laboris insumam? Nec ipse quidem inficias eo, quidni? Qui experientia doctus id ausim confirmare, nec principes tales nunc esse quales antehac extitere, nec ea laborum virtutumque praemia. Sed quis adeo fuerit sive illiberalis sive ingratissimus princeps, qui, ubi librum hunc illi traductum dono detuleris, non te muneribus principe dignis et magnis honoribus prosequatur?[70]

65 Querini 1743: 290.
66 Translation quoted from Monfasani 1976: 76.
67 For Decembrio's translation, see Monfasani 2016: 115–121.
68 Monfasani 2016: 116.
69 Modigliani 2005: 66–67.
70 Undated letter to Cristoforo Persona. Latin text and translation quoted from Beullens and Gotthelf 2007: 502 and n. 98, with modifications.

> But you will say that now those rewards that according to your story Pope Nicholas had offered are not available, and that now there are no such princes that follow in his footsteps. Why, then, should I undertake such a work? I do not deny this myself, of course. Since I have learned it by experience, I would dare confirm that now there are neither such princes as before, nor such rewards for toils and talents. But what prince would be so niggardly or ungrateful that, when you present this book that was translated for him as a gift, he would not bestow on you gifts worthy of a prince and great honors?

Gaza's conclusion is that it is still worth-while to make translations of Greek texts, but this passage illustrates that this was not now so obvious as it had once been.

5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have presented a case study of change, in the shape of humanist activities of translation in the middle of the fifteenth century. My exploration is limited in scope, and a comparison with other humanist circles such as Florence, Naples, and Urbino, would put my observations into further perspective. For now, however, we can conclude that the period under Nicholas V brought about change in more than one way: not only did the production of translations increase, but a sporadic movement also changed into a coordinated program. This change was caused by multiple agents: the patron, Pope Nicholas V; the intellectual network of humanists at the court, in their multiple roles of translators, assistants, readers, and critics; and other, intermediary figures such as the cardinals. The newly established Vatican library, as well as the printing press a generation later, can be considered non-human agents. All these agents contributed to the environment, the conditions, and the vision that led to productivity and coordination.

Perhaps the most striking conclusion is that the same agents that gave an impulse to the translation program also prevented it from spreading further. The presence of a pool of translators at the papal court enabled Nicholas to commission many translations in a short period of time, but the competition between them also led to rivalry and to wrecked careers. The generous remuneration by Nicholas V encouraged translators to take up translation projects, but it discouraged them from making new translations after his death. The ideal of providing translations of all Greek classics in fact would have acted as a limitation to the movement: it was necessarily a finite activity, since it would

die out once all the Greek texts were translated. For all these reasons, the translation movement never grew into an epidemic.

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CHAPTER 10

Erasmus, an Unsuspected Superspreader of New Ancient Greek?

Raf Van Rooy

1 Introduction

Brussels. January 6, 1504. Erasmus is standing on the podium, having just sung the praise of Philip the Handsome. This Habsburg prince had arrived back home in the Southern Low Countries from a trip to Spain. Erasmus' praise (*Panegyricus*) was evidently written and recited in Latin, the principal language of culture in the early sixteenth century, but for this formal occasion Erasmus probably also composed the following short poem:

> Χαῖρε Φίλιππε, πάτρας γλυκερὸν φάος, ὄρχαμε λαῶν.
> Ὦ φίλ', ἐπεὶ νόστησας ἐελδομένοισι μάλ' ἡμῖν
> σῶός τ' ἠύς τε μέγας τε, θεοὶ δέ σε ἤγαγον αὐτοί,[1]
> οὖλέ τε καὶ μάλα χαῖρε, θεοὶ δέ τοι ὄλβια δοῖεν
> καὶ παισὶν παίδων καὶ τοὶ μετόπισθε γένωνται.
> Ἄλκιμος ἔσσ' αἰεί, καὶ σοῦ κλέος οὐκ ἀπολεῖται.
> Τέλος.

> Welcome Philip, sweet light of the fatherland, leader of nations.
> Dear prince, now that you have returned to us, who desired it so much,
> safe and sound, and brave, and great, and the gods have guided you themselves,
> health and great joy be with you, and may the gods grant prosperity to you
> and to your children's children and to those who will be born afterwards.
> Always be brave, and your fame will not perish.
> The end.[2]

1 For the scansion to work in this line, we should assume an unusual synizesis in *sôos* (σῶος): see Lamers and Van Rooy 2022a: 224.

2 Text and translation reproduced from Lamers and Van Rooy 2022a: 223–224.

Perhaps Erasmus recited at the same occasion this Homeric cento, six lines put together out of words and (half)verses from Homer's epic poems. This Homeric theme, including many lofty epithets, was of course very suitable for celebrating the return of a prince after a long journey. As such, Erasmus' choice of topic and language was well-considered, as well as very original, since the cento formed an early composition in New Ancient Greek: a language imitating the literary dialects of ancient Greece and used by scholars since the revaluation of the classical Greek heritage during the Renaissance.[3]

2 Erasmus and New Ancient Greek: Context and Corpus

Erasmus was certainly not the first humanist to write in New Ancient Greek, let alone the most prolific author in this language. This trend emerged as a side effect of the fascination with ancient Greece in fifteenth-century Italy. Pioneers were Byzantine migrants such as Basilios Bessarion, and the Italian humanists Francesco Filelfo and Angelo Poliziano, who corresponded and composed poems in Greek, thus setting the tone for later centuries, as epistolography and poetry came to dominate the extant New Ancient Greek corpus spanning the period from the 1400s until today.[4] The Frisian humanist Rudolf Agricola (1444–1485) was the first scholar from the Low Countries to follow in the footsteps of his Italian colleagues, as in 1484, in Heidelberg, he wrote part of a letter in Greek. The letter was addressed to the young German scholar Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), who himself had written Agricola a now lost letter in Greek. Agricola wanted to pay his respects to Reuchlin by responding in Greek but soon had to switch to Latin since Greek came not as naturally to him as the language of the ancient Romans.[5]

The New Ancient Greek fashion reached an early culmination at Aldo Manuzio's *Neakadêmia* (Νεακαδημία), 'New Academy', a largely idealized intellectual circle with Italian and Greek humanists which Erasmus also

3 On New Ancient Greek, calqued from German *Neualtgriechisch* (cf. Dutch *Nieuw-Oudgrieks*), see most notably Weise 2017; Päll and Volt 2018; some papers in Constantinidou and Lamers 2020; Kajava et al. 2020; the anthology in Pontani and Weise 2022; Van Rooy 2023. For a Leiden-focused anthology, see van den Berg et al. 1993. Alternative terms for New Ancient Greek include Humanist Greek, Neo-Ancient Greek, and Neo-Paleo-Greek.

4 For Italy as trendsetter, see Pontani 2017; 2022. Notably, the Erasmian cento is distinctly reminiscent of some of the Greek welcome poems Poliziano wrote in his late teens (early 1470s). For these poems, full of Homeric formulae, see the first half of Poliziano's *Liber epigrammatum Graecorum* (F. Pontani 2002), the first collection of Greek epigrams by a western humanist to be published in print (posthumously in 1498, as part of his *Opera*: Pontani 2022: 84, 97).

5 Lamers and Van Rooy 2022c: 448–449.

frequented, and where only Ancient Greek was to be spoken, as the academy's slightly humorous statutes prescribed.[6] Even if much of this undertaking remained a dream, as Martin Lowry has put it, the very desire to found such a Greek-centered academy suggests that humanists were ready to upgrade the auxiliary status of the Greek heritage. Indeed, Greek studies had initially been designed to help gain a better understanding of Roman culture and Latin literature. Around 1500, numerous Hellenists developed a growing interest in ancient Greece for its own sake. Erasmus was a transitional figure in this evolution, as he encouraged his readers, colleagues, and students 'First to hurry to the sources themselves, that is to say the Greek and ancient ones'—hence the well-known humanist adage *Ad fontes*.[7] On the other hand, in his biblical criticism, the study of the original Greek New Testament primarily served the goal of finding a more accurate Latin translation of this foundational text of Christianity.[8]

Erasmus' position as a pivotal agent, well-established for his theological method, may have contributed to the success of New Ancient Greek as well. That is at least what I argue in this contribution. More specifically, I intend to make a case for Erasmus as an unsuspected superspreader of New Ancient Greek. Even though he wrote only seven short and fairly unoriginal texts entirely in Greek, and his authorship is not always uncontested, I try to demonstrate how these short pieces by Erasmus may have made a big difference, contributing to bringing about a tipping point in humanist linguistic culture.[9] Malcolm Gladwell's book constitutes the starting point for my analysis of Erasmus' New Ancient Greek agency, which leads to some critical reflections on the value of Gladwell's framework, designed in the context of modern society, for earlier historical periods. My critical observations are based on my case study of Erasmus, whom I try to position vis-à-vis other agents, both animate and inanimate.[10]

The Erasmian corpus of self-standing Greek texts comprises seven poems written between 1502 and 1531. I exclude his extensive correspondence from my analysis, which is mostly written in Latin but often features Greek terms

6 See e.g. Lowry 1976.

7 Erasmus [1512?]: fol. 62v: 'Sed in pri[mi]s ad fontes ipsos p[ro]perandu[m]: id est grȩcos & antiquos'. For a recent monumental biography of Erasmus, in Dutch, see Langereis 2021.

8 See e.g. Bentley 1983.

9 Gladwell 2000.

10 Cf. e.g. Bennett 2010.

and phrases. Greek intermezzi in otherwise Latin works are likewise omitted.[11] Even though these Greek elements in Erasmus' Latin works no doubt also conveyed the idea to his readers that writing in Greek was a humanist activity, the self-standing poems attributed to him had a remarkable visibility and impact, as I argue. First, however, I briefly survey Erasmus' Greek pieces (cf. Table 10.1).

Erasmus' Greek output comprises only poems, often accompanied by a Latin piece, either a translation or a different poem on the same topic. The texts were all published during his lifetime, scattered in publications of varying nature, and were reprinted long after his death. Most compositions are in iambic meters, especially the trimeter, typical of spoken word in classical Attic theater. Even if collections such as the *Greek Anthology* also contain trimetric poems that were not meant to be performed, Erasmus' predilection for that meter might suggest that he aimed to write lively poems, perhaps intended for recitation. Indeed, four out of seven texts are epitaphs (poems 1, 4–6), which are not unlikely to have been performed at the funerals of the humanists they commemorate, or were at least written as if they could have been. The other three poems share this performative dimension. The Homeric cento for Philip the Handsome (poem 2) might have been recited upon his arrival in the Low Countries (see Section 1). The votive offering to the Virgin of Walsingham (poem 3) is a prayer, a genre by definition aimed at performance. Finally, the advertisement for the Aristotle edition is a comic dialogue between a bookseller and a philologist (poem 7). Although there was probably no book launch event at which the dialogue was actually performed, it seems that Erasmus and his presumed co-author Simon Grynaeus (1493–1541) wanted to enliven the book as material object by having it speak to potential buyers. As such, the dialogue leaves a performative impression, both by its comic meter and by its address to potential customers, even if it was not actually performed and might merely reiterate the motif of a 1519 dialogue by Arsenios Apostolis.[12] In sum, Erasmus' Greek poems all had a performative air in some way or other, as they were either recited or otherwise aimed at a real-world effect.[13] These short texts were in other words agents in the sense that they invited people to do something with them—to read, recite and perform them.

11 See most notably the poetic intervention in the colloquy *Convivium poeticum* (Erasmus 1956: 387, n° Appendix 1-4; 1993: 356–357, n° 130.34–37). On Erasmus' use of Greek in his letters, see Rummel 1981.

12 Zoras et al. 2022: 52–55.

13 For my understanding of 'performance', see Van Rooy 2023: 120–131.

TABLE 10.1 Overview of the self-standing Greek poems attributed to Erasmus, arranged chronologically

#	Subject	Date	Title in first ed.	# Lines	Meter	First ed.	Modern ed.	Comment
1	Epitaph for Jacob Batt	July 1502 or shortly after	*Iacobo Bato gręco dimetro Ia[m]bico.*	2	iambic dimeter	Erasmus 1507: sig. B.iii.^{R}	Reedijk 1956: 262, n° 62; Vredeveld 1993: 60–61, n° 16; Lamers & Van Rooy 2022a: 222	With Latin translation by Erasmus.
2	Homeric cento for Philip the Handsome	ca. November 1503–January 1504	*Il[lustrissimo] prin[cipi] Philippo reduce Homerocenton.*	6	hexameter	Erasmus 1504: title page	Reedijk 1956: 277, n° 79; Vredeveld 1993: 138–139, n° 63; Lamers & Van Rooy 2022a: 223	Authorship contested by some modern scholars but considered genuine in the 16th century.
3	Votive offering to the Virgin of Walsingham	ca. Spring 1512	*Erasmi Roterod[ami] Carmen Iambicum, ex voto dicatum Virgini Vualsingamicæ apud Britannos*	14	iambic trimeter	Erasmus 1515: sig. Bb vij^{R}	Reedijk 1956: 303, n° 92; Vredeveld 1993: 120–123, n° 51	Erasmus allegedly hung the poem on site at the shrine.

TABLE 10.1 Overview of the self-standing Greek poems attributed to Erasmus, arranged chronologically (*cont.*)

#	Subject	Date	Title in first ed.	# Lines	Meter	First ed.	Modern ed.	Comment
4	Ekphrastic epitaph accompanying a painting of Jerome of Busleyden	ca. 26 March–August 1518	*Epitaphium ad pictam imaginem clarissimi viri Hieronymi Buslidiani* [...]	9	iambic trimeter	Erasmus 1518: 141–142	Reedijk 1956: 328, n° 106; Vredeveld 1993: 152–153, n° 68; Van Rooy 2023: 79–80	Erasmus wrote a different poem in Latin on the same theme. Part of letter to Jerome's brother Aegidius.
5	Epitaph for Johann Froben	ca. November 1527–March 1528	*Eiusdem* [*Erasmi*] *in eundem* [*Frobenium*] *Græce.*	4	catalectic trochaic tetrameter	Erasmus 1528: 431	Reedijk 1956: 339, n° 117; Vredeveld 1993: 156–159, n° 74	Preceded by a different poem in Latin on the same theme.
6	Epitaph for Nicolaas Uutenhove	1 February 1529	*Græcum sic habet.*	7	iambic trimeter	Erasmus 1529: sig. a 4^{v}	Reedijk 1956: 344, n° 122; Vredeveld 1993: 160–161, n° 79	Preceded by a different poem in Latin on the same theme.
7	Comic dialogue promoting a new Aristotle edition	Winter 1530/1531	*Per Des*[*iderium*] *Eras*[*mum*] *Roterodamum* φιλολόγου καὶ βιβλιοπώλου διάλογος.	12	iambic trimeter	Aristotle 1531: title page	Reedijk 1956: 349–350, n° 130; Vredeveld 1993: 166–167, n° 87; Lamers & Van Rooy 2022a: 225	Co-authored with the Aristotle editor Simon Grynaeus.

3 Superspreading New Ancient Greek?

Despite the fact that Erasmus only wrote seven poems, running to a mere fifty-four lines, I argue nevertheless that he contributed greatly to the success of New Ancient Greek, and that he might qualify as a superspreader of the phenomenon, in that he contributed to popularizing Greek as a language of composition in different parts of Europe, and disproportionately so in view of his output. Indeed, at least partly stimulated by Erasmus, Greek writing boomed. What evidence can be invoked to support this hypothesis? Three factors seem to have been particularly important.

3.1 *Christian Hellenism*

Firstly, as the guiding spirit of the foundation of the Three-Language College in Leuven, Erasmus was the most ardent advocate of the study of Greek for philological and theological reasons. This study served to gain a better understanding of the admired classical past and its esteemed moral ideals. A study of fine language was supposed to lead to upright morals. At the same time, the study of Greek helped to arrive at a more accurate Latin version of the New Testament. This double motivation also provided the incentive for Erasmus to write some pieces in Greek. On the one hand, writing in Greek was a way of polishing one's linguistic skills and morals. A self-proclaimed autodidact who taught Greek at Queens' College in Cambridge and elsewhere, Erasmus was in a position to suggest that his students practice their skills by composing in Greek (cf. Section 3.3). On the other hand, Greek was the number one language of Christianity and could therefore also be used as a language of prayer, as poem 3 suggests. This text is signed 'Prayer by Erasmus' (Εὐχὴ τοῦ Ἐράσμου) and is very playful, as the poet asks the virgin of Walsingham 'for the greatest of boons: a devout / heart, completely free for once from sin', which he contrasted with the material wishes of the other pilgrims.[14] This way, he introduced religious criticism into his short poem, which he left at the shrine for display, and which he encouraged Andrea Ammonio, one of his correspondents, to look for should he visit the place: 'I am to pay a visit to Our Lady of Walsingham, and I will there hang up a votive offering of a Greek poem. Look for it if ever you visit the place'.[15] He also had it printed in several of his works, starting with his

14 Text and translation in Erasmus 1993: 122–123: γέρας / μέγιστον αἰτῶ, θεοσεβῆ τὴν καρδίαν / πασῶν θ' ἅπαξ ἁμαρτιῶν ἐλευθέραν.

15 Cited in Vredeveld 1993: 520. For the religious criticism in this prayer see Pabel 1997: 88–89.

Lucubrationes in 1515. Reedijk has listed no less than eighteen early modern editions of the prayer in different publications.[16]

Erasmus, in other words, actively promoted his prayer, thus ensuring visibility for his text and inspiring fellow scholars to use Greek in personal contact with God, Jesus, and Mary. Erasmus' choice of language was no doubt stimulated by the fact that Greek primers often contained texts such as the Lord's Prayer, books with which Erasmus was no doubt intimately familiar, as he translated Theodore Gaza's Greek grammar partly into Latin.[17] While it remains to be seen how the speech act of praying in Greek developed in humanism, it seems that Erasmus' example stimulated Christian poetry in the language, as did the work by his Italian and Greek predecessors Filelfo, Poliziano, and Marcus Musurus, and especially reformed German humanists such as Philipp Melanchthon and Martin Crusius.[18] Erasmus' daring move to back-translate the last lines of *Revelation* (22.16–21) from the Latin Vulgate into Greek perhaps further stimulated active uses of Greek, all the more so since this controversial move was widely known in his day and age. Erasmus himself alluded no less than three times to this invasive intervention in the Bible text, necessitated by the fact that he had no reliable Greek manuscripts for *Revelation* that transmitted the final lines of this last book of the New Testament.[19]

Erasmus' pivotal role in the flourishing of Christian Hellenism no doubt encouraged the tradition of Christian Greek writing, although it was first and foremost Protestantism that further boosted religious appropriations of Ancient Greek.[20] Studying Greek became to a considerable extent synonymous with being a Lutheran: *qui graecizabant, lutheranizabant*, the adage went.[21] As a result, Ancient Greek became a domain of fierce religious contest in various parts of Europe, not least England, the Low Countries, France, and Switzerland, all places where Erasmus worked for long periods of time.[22]

The New Ancient Greek corpus produced in the early modern period still needs to be accurately mapped, and this is also true for the subset of Greek

16 Reedijk 1956: 303.

17 Botley 2010: 20–23.

18 For Filelfo and Poliziano, see Pontani 2022: 91–98. For Musurus, see Zoras et al. 2022: esp. 50. For the German tradition, see Weise 2022.

19 See Krans 2011 for details.

20 For Christian humanism, see e.g. the papers in Zimmermann 2017: esp. Part II. For its relation to New Ancient Greek in particular, see Pontani 2018.

21 See e.g. Rummel 2000; Rhein 2017; and the references in Constantinidou and Lamers 2020: 12–15.

22 For England, for instance, see among others Lazarus 2015 and various papers in McDiarmid and Wabuda 2022. For the broader *bataille du grec*, see Saladin 2000 (and later reeditions) with A. Pontani 2002.

prayers, but two elements can be pointed out here. Firstly, similar prayers tailored to local shrines and saints are extant, such as Willem van de Ven's (Vennius, b. 1548) prayer to St. Oda of Scotland, written on December 16, 1570 and addressed to the patron saint of Sint-Oedenrode, a town in the Duchy of Brabant. It is entitled 'The poet's prayer' (Προσευχὴ τοῦ ποιητοῦ), reminiscent of Erasmus' εὐχή, even though the poem is in elegiac couplets rather than iambic trimeters, and probably reflects the Counterreformation's attempts at renovating the veneration of local saints.[23] Secondly, Erasmus' prayer may have been one of the stepping-stones toward the strong tradition of poetical paraphrases of the Psalms in New Ancient Greek, buttressed by the Protestant Hellenist Joachim Camerarius, who was one of the first, if not the first, to produce one. That paraphrastic tradition was also stimulated by a growing fascination with Nonnus of Panopolis, author of a much-read Greek poetical paraphrase of the gospel of John.[24]

Although a powerful contextual factor, Erasmus' Christian Hellenism alone is not sufficient to prove that the humanist was one of the superspreaders of New Ancient Greek. I therefore adduce two much more tangible pieces of evidence that go hand in hand: the visibility of the poems, on the one hand, and Erasmus' extensive network, on the other, with which he stimulated Greek writing, both directly and indirectly, through his vast correspondence.

3.2 *Visibility and Circulation*

Erasmus' poems were repeatedly published, often in very visible places, likely following practices he had seen in Italy.[25] This way, his writings were in a position to be noticed by contemporary readers, turning them into potential New Ancient Greek authors. In contrast with many Latin verses of his, Erasmus published all his extant Greek poems knowingly and willingly during his lifetime, either as part of the 1518 Basel edition of his epigrams which he probably oversaw himself, or as part of numerous other editions of his own works or editions of classical authors to which he added paratexts. This conscious publication strategy gives the impression that he wanted to show his scholarly audience, for whom Latin remained the most important language of communication and poetical expression, that Greek also lent itself to these ends. The fact that there were numerous posthumous editions confirms that his later editors, too, considered these Greek pieces worth printing. As Figure 10.1 shows, his poems

23 Lamers and Van Rooy 2022a: 231–232.

24 For Camerarius' paraphrase of Psalm 133, see Weng 2003. For Nonnus in the Renaissance, see Tissoni 2016.

25 See the anthology in Pontani 2022, with discussion of visibility strategies.

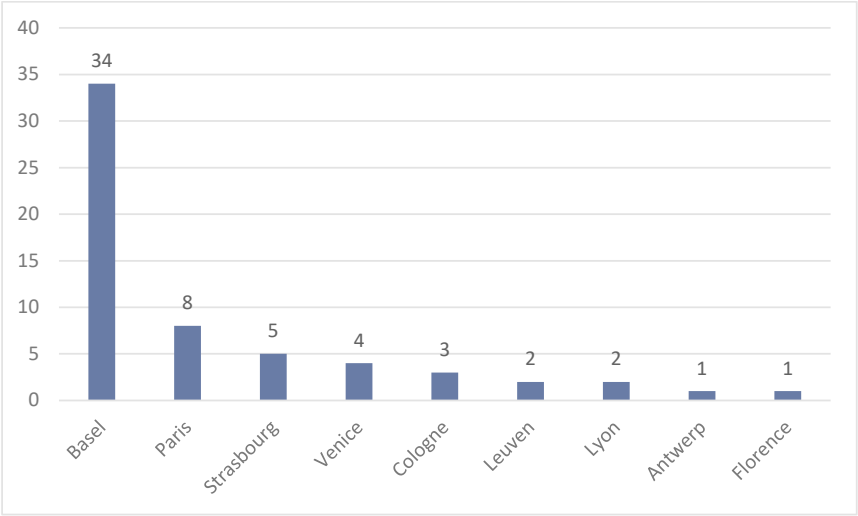


FIGURE 10.1 Editions with Greek poems by Erasmus, ca. 1504–1560
BASED ON DATA FROM REEDIJK 1956

appeared during the years 1504–1560 mostly in Basel, where he spent a lot of time and left an enduring legacy: thirty-four different editions were printed there. Ten editions were published in France, especially in Paris. The western Holy Roman Empire witnessed eight editions. Italy, with five editions, and the Low Countries, with three editions, complete the picture, which is geographically very diverse. The epicenter was, however, Basel, situated more or less at the geographic center of Europe, from where copies could reach all parts of the continent easily.

The visibility of Erasmus' poems was further ensured by the prominent positions in which they featured, often on the title page or at the very end of a book. Several texts were true eyecatchers, especially poems 2 and 7. Erasmus might have picked up the practice of putting Greek advertisements in new publications at the Aldine press, where it had been turned into an art and a selling point. Book-historical evidence suggests that poem 7 attracted intensive interest from readers. In a negative form of attention, a Roman copy of the 1531 edition has the poem blacked out with ink because Erasmus' oeuvre was on the Catholic *Index librorum prohibitorum*.[26] In another copy, the poem is accompanied by the handwritten note: 'Auth[or] damnat[us] et expurgatione permissus', meaning 'condemned author and permitted on the condition of

26 Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, 69. 4.G.35.2.

expurgation'.[27] Apparently, the Greek poem did not contain anything harmful to the censor's mind: or was he unable to read the Greek and did he give these few lines the benefit of the doubt? The most compelling evidence for interest in the comic dialogue by Erasmus and Grynaeus is offered by a Munich copy of the 1539 edition (Figure 10.2).[28] In this book, Erasmus' name has been blacked out for the greatest part, together with the place of publication (Basel), probably by a later hand. At the same time, this copy offers an integral Latin translation written in an earlier hand and signed 'M.M. Spelt'. I have thus far been unable to identify this figure with great confidence, but the humanist hand is probably to be situated in the second half of the sixteenth century and in a Protestant milieu. It might concern a relation of a certain 'Wolfgangus Spelt', who was robbed during the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572 in Orléans, where he worked as teacher of the count of Hohenlohe.[29] This Wolfgang seems to have been active in Coburg later in the 1570s and is perhaps a relation of one 'Michael Speldt', chamberlain in Berlin, whose death is recorded to have occurred on August 8, 1586.[30] In any event, the verbatim rendering suggests that Erasmus' translator wanted to understand every Greek word of the poem, perhaps indicating that a student or a teacher was at work. It can therefore be hypothesized that Erasmus' reader was likely a German Protestant self-identifying as 'M[agister] M[ichael] Spelt', active between ca. 1550 and 1586.

Studying other, undigitized copies of editions containing Greek poems by Erasmus will no doubt offer further evidence that his compositions were widely read, although probably not as intensely as, for instance, Poliziano's popular book of Greek epigrams, which circulated also in Latin translation, both in manuscript and in print.[31] However, such a large-scale analysis lies outside the scope of this contribution. Instead, I want to focus on another intriguing piece of evidence showing that Erasmus had an audience for his Greek poetry.

After his close friend Jacob Batt (ca. 1466–1502) died in the early summer of 1502, Erasmus, then still perfecting his Greek, wrote a short two-line epitaph in iambic dimeter, presumably his earliest composition:

27 Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Biblioteca Histórica Fondo Antiguo, (F)-Préstamo protegido especial, BH FLL 25466.

28 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Handschriftenabt. Magazin, 4 L.impr.c.n.mss. 114-1/2.

29 Ridderikhoff and de Ridder-Symoens 2013: 293 n. 1.

30 See the Latin poem written by a 'Wolfgangus Speltus' in 1576 included in Mass 1577: fol. A i^{r}–A ij^{v}. For Michael Speldt, see *Verein für die Geschichte der Stadt Berlin* 1865: 33.

31 F. Pontani 2002.

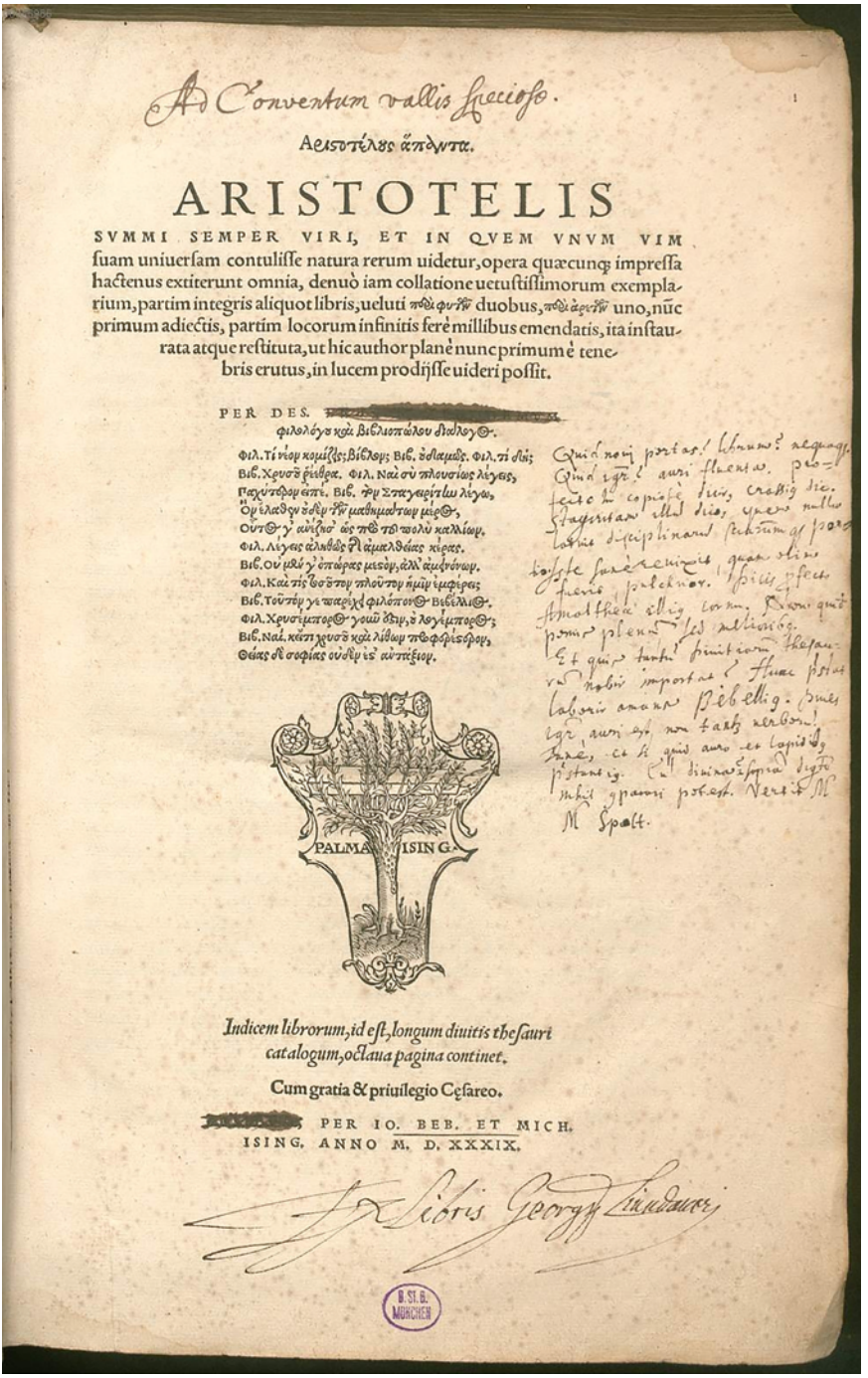


FIGURE 10.2 Poem 7 in a copy of the 1539 edition, with manuscript Latin translation
CREDIT: MUNICH, BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK—CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Ἰάκωβε Βάττε, θάρσεο·
καλῶς θανὼν παλιμφύει.

Jacob Batt, have courage:
he who dies well is born again.[32]

In this very short epigram, Erasmus managed to allude not only to the Last Judgment, but also to pagan Greek literature by evoking Theocritus' *Idyllia*, where a pastor called Battus is comforted by Corydon, and where life and death are also contrasted.[33] The second line of this epigram, a highly condensed expression of Christian eschatology, came to have an afterlife as an adage in several epitaphs, especially in the former cathedral of Basel, now the Basel Minster:

(1) Καλῶς θανὼν παλιμφύει ('He who dies well is born again') serves as a collective epitaph in the Basel Minster for five of the children of the Swiss Protestant exegete Johann Jakob Grynaeus (1540–1617) and his wife Lavinia Canonia, who all succumbed to the plague in the final decades of the sixteenth century;

(2) Καλῶς θανῶν [*sic*] ἐν Χριστῷ παλιμφύει ('He who dies well in Christ is born again') is the text of a modest memorial plaque for the Protestant theologian Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf (1561–1610) in the Basel Minster, where the Greek verse has become illegible but its presence is confirmed by a printed version of the epitaph from 1625; and

(3) Καλῶς θανὼν πάλιν φύει ('He who dies well is born again'), with two words for 'is born again' (*palin phuei*) instead of the Erasmian *palimphuei*, constitutes the centerpiece of the impressive memorial stone in the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Geboortekerk of Broechem (present-day Belgium) for the Antwerp nobleman Philippe le Roy (1596–1679).[34]

In the Basel Minster, the Greek line became part of funerary culture, featuring on the tombs of prominent citizens buried as late as 1818.[35] This very local influence of Erasmus' earliest New Ancient Greek composition is not a coincidence: Erasmus himself is also buried there. It seems, therefore, that the company of this illustrious humanist inspired prominent Basel citizens to look

32 Edition and translation from Lamers and Van Rooy 2022a: 222–223, whose notes also guide part of my discussion. For more information on Erasmus' sources, see Van Rooy 2023: 62–65.

33 See Theoc. *Id.* 4.41: θαρσεῖν χρή, φίλε Βάττε.

34 On these epitaphs, see Janssens and Pronay 2021, where they are cited. In the Polanus epitaph, the addition of ἐν Χριστῷ compromises the iambic meter.

35 Janssens and Pronay 2021: 27 n. 6.

in his oeuvre for a terse and adequate line with regard to the Last Judgment, which they found in one of the seven editions in which the Battus epitaph was included, and on which they imposed a strict Protestant interpretation. A key role in this story might have been played by the Reformed Grynaeus family. Simon Grynaeus had co-authored the Greek comic dialogue with Erasmus, and it was his nephew Johann Jakob who probably used the line on two different occasions, the death of his five children and that of his son-in-law Amandus Polanus. Another possibility is that Erasmus' memorial stone originally included this Greek line as well but that the Greek text is now lost. However, since there is no mention of any Greek on Erasmus' tombstone by contemporary visitors, I can assume that the initial transmission of the Greek line probably occurred from book to stone and not from stone to stone, much like the epigrams on Guarino Favorino's (†1537) funeral monument.[36] In any event, the eager adage collector Erasmus could now boast his very own Greek saying, and a Christian one at that.

It would be worthwhile to further explore the success of Erasmus' line and map out in greater detail how it was transmitted. For my purposes it suffices to conclude that Erasmus' Greek compositions were not only actively and eagerly read but even used and reused in commemorative contexts without any reference to the original poem. The anonymously transmitted line thus further contributed to the popularization of New Ancient Greek as a medium without Erasmus being the clear source—demonstrating how famous agents can become invisible.

3.3 *Mobility and Network*

Finally, Erasmus' great mobility and network put him in an excellent position to spread the practice of writing New Ancient Greek, core nodes being Basel and Leuven. The humanist traveled far and wide, meeting kindred spirits, whom he time and again incited to study Greek, either as a professor before his students, or as a friend and fellow scholar, both in real life or through his vast correspondence. Since it is impossible to reconstruct his courses and conversations, one has to rely on his letters to find out to what extent he promoted the active use of Greek. That he did so is proved by his exchange with the Spanish Hellenist Francisco de Vergara (d. 1545).[37] On September 2, 1527, Erasmus received a letter, entirely in Greek, from this humanist, who held the Greek chair at the Three-Language College of Alcalá university. This letter charmed

36 Pontani 2022: 102.

37 On Vergara, see e.g. López Rueda 1973: *passim*. On Erasmus and Spain, see e.g. Bataillon 1950.

Erasmus so much that he immediately forwarded a copy from Basel to Leuven as a model for local Hellenists to imitate.[38] In other words, he actively spread commendable specimens of New Ancient Greek in order to stimulate the practice of composing in this language.

Erasmus' mobility also led to New Ancient Greek synergy. With the Swabian-born Hellenist and Aristotle editor Simon Grynaeus he composed poem 7. Interestingly, lively traces of their collaboration are extant in their epistolary exchange, where one finds a discussion on the wordings of specific lines of their poetic dialogue, which suggests that there had also been oral interaction earlier.[39] Probably in February 1531, Grynaeus wrote from Basel to Erasmus in Freiburg (im Breisgau):

> As for our limping iambs, you should know that we have not had great aspirations but have willingly embraced and abused every license, while satisfying the haste of the typographers. Of the construction *polu kalliôn* ('much more beautiful') there is an example with Isaeus, namely *polu mallon hetoimoteron*, 'much more promptly', as Budé renders it. Lesser-known to me is *khrusôn rheethra* ('streams of golden things [plur.]'), as I would say *khrusou rheethra* ('streams of gold [sing.]') or *khruseia rheethra* ('golden streams').[40]

In his answer, Erasmus focused on the last phrase. In doing so, he revisited an earlier suggestion of his and admitted a mistake he had made against the Greek idiom, adding at the same time that an authoritative source is actually

38 Allen and Allen 1928: 169, n° 1876: 'Quis credidisset huc usque progressuras Graecanicas literas, ut adolescentes scriberent epistolas tam feliciter ἑλληνιζούσας? […] Visum est epistolae tuae exemplar mittere Lovanium ad Collegii Trilinguis, quod ibi florentissimum est, professores, quo magis illos extimularem'. ('Who would have thought that Greek letters would progress up to this point, that youngsters would write letters that *speak Greek* so successfully? I decided to send a copy of your letter to Leuven, to the professors of the Three-Language College, which greatly flourishes there, in order to stimulate them further' [my translation].)

39 See Lamers and Van Rooy 2022a: 225–227 for details.

40 My translation of Allen and Garrod 1938: 141, n° 2433: 'De scazontibus nostris, scias nihil affectasse nos, sed omnem licentiam libenter amplexos abusosque, dum festinationi typographorum facimus satis. Τοῦ πολ[λ]ὺ καλλίων exemplum est apud Isaeum, seu πολὺ μᾶλλον ἑτοιμότερον· 'multo promptius' reddit Budaeus. Minus mihi notum est χρυσῶν ῥέεθρα; dicerem enim χρυσοῦ ῥέεθρα ἢ χρύσεια ῥέεθρα'. The parallel with Isaeus (*De Nicostrato* 14.4) is intended as follows: the passage also has the sequence *polu* (πολύ) plus a comparative. Modern editors insert *kai* between *mallon* and *hetoimoteron*: Ὁπότε δὲ καὶ τοὺς ὁμολογουμένως παραγενομένους οἷόν τ' ἐστιν ἐξαπατῆσαι, πῶς οὐκ ἂν ὑμᾶς γε τοὺς μηδὲν τοῦ πράγματος εἰδότας πολὺ μᾶλλον ⟨καὶ⟩ ἑτοιμότερόν τις παρακρούσασθαι ἐγχειρήσειεν.

not so important for an unproblematic expression such as *khrusou rheethra* (χρυσοῦ ῥέεθρα), which made it into the final version:

> I do not know why I got stuck with the firm belief that the Greeks would say *orê khrusôn* ('mountains of golden things'), but I have not been able to find an example. *Khrusôn rheethra* could have been excused as 'stream of golden things', but I prefer *khrusou rheethra* ('streams of gold'). This is so certain that it does not need any justification.[41]

Interestingly, Grynaeus complained that Erasmus and he himself had had to compose the dialogue in great haste, pressured by the publisher of the Aristotle edition, Johann Bebel, who finished printing on April 13, 1531.[42] This remark suggests that typographers were also agents to be reckoned with in the spread and publication of New Ancient Greek texts. Time was money, so books had to get published quickly in order to generate revenues. This market reality could force Greek authors to compose in haste, thereby forsaking to follow the great classical examples, as humanist praxis would prefer it.

More generally, speed of composition might qualify as a typical property of many New Ancient Greek letters and poems, most of which were written for very specific occasions and produced in publisher milieus. This occasional character is clearly true for Erasmus' poems, suggesting that Greek composition was of a rather ephemeral nature, bound to highly specific contexts. Erasmus did, of course, not invent Greek occasional poetry, but he seems to have been an early adopter and spreader of a practice promoted at the publishing house of Aldo Manuzio in Venice. Filippomaria Pontani summarizes this development as follows:

> Between the late 15th and the early 16th century, a large number of scholars working on Italian soil—both Greeks and Italians—started to round off their works, their translations or editions, by means of introductory epigrams in praise of their sponsors, their friends, or the ancient or modern authors evoked in the book. This practice grew so popular [...] that

41 My translation of Allen and Garrod 1938: 142–143, n° 2434: 'Mihi nescio unde hausta insederat opinio, ὄρη χρυσῶν dici Graece: sed exemplum invenire non potui. Χρυσῶν ῥέεθρα excusari poterat, rerum aurearum flumen; sed malo χρυσοῦ ῥέεθρα: quod ut certum est, ita non eget patrocinio'.

42 The colophon indicates that printing was finished on the thirteenth of the Attic month Thargelion, in sixteenth-century handbooks usually identified with the month of April.

> Greek verse *de facto* became the usual tool for an exquisite and refined *poésie d'occasion* aimed at a narrow circle of erudites.[43]

In addition to new books, Greek was eagerly used as a solemn means to commemorate the death of a sponsor, friend, or fellow scholar. Erasmus shared this predilection: four out of his seven poems are epitaphs. He even seems to have contributed to popularizing Greek as a medium for this genre, as the epigraphic evidence presented in Section 3.2 suggests, and there is further evidence to corroborate this hypothesis. The fact that Erasmus boasted an extensive network meant that he had a lot of people to mourn when they died. It seems that he only wrote in Greek for people who were very dear to him or whom he admired:

(1) Jacob Batt, his faithful old study friend who was the main character of Erasmus' *Antibarbari* in its revised version;
(2) Jerome of Busleyden (ca. 1470–1517), the material founder of the Three-Language College in Leuven, Erasmus' brainchild;
(3) Johann Froben (ca. 1460–1527), one of Erasmus' favorite publishers who printed, among other important works, his ground-breaking *Novum Instrumentum* (first edition in 1516);
(4) Nicolaas Uutenhove (d. 1527), president of the council of Flanders whom Erasmus greatly admired, and father of Karel Uutenhove (active ca. 1524–1577), who attended the Three-Language College at the instigation of his father.

Several pieces of evidence indicate that Erasmus stimulated others to use Greek in epitaphs. For instance, to his epitaph for Uutenhove, there came a Greek response by Arnoldus Oridryus (Arnold van Bergeijk, d. 1533), included in Oridryus' Greek primer, published in Paris in 1531.[44] After Erasmus himself had died in 1536, Rutger Rescius (ca. 1495–1545), Oridryus' teacher of Greek and professor at the Three-Language College, printed a collection of epitaphs for Erasmus, who had secured him his position as first chairholder of Greek almost twenty years earlier. The booklet appeared in March 1537, featuring Latin and Greek poems and even a composition in four elegiac couplets alternating a Latin hexameter with a Greek pentameter.[45] Rescius, in turn, was also honored with Greek epitaphs only recently retrieved from a manuscript at Leiden

43 Pontani 2017: 319.
44 Oridryus 1531.
45 *Erasmi Epitaphia* 1537. See also the collection in Erasmus 1537, which reprinted *Erasmi Epitaphia* 1537 but also added new poems in both Latin and Greek. On these epitaphs, see e.g. Tournoy 2006; Van Rooy 2023: 50–52.

University Library.[46] In other words, Erasmus seems to have contributed to establishing a Hellenizing epitaph tradition, specifically in the Low Countries.

4 Concluding Remarks: The Agency of Erasmus and Beyond

The Law of the Few states that there are exceptional people out there who are capable of starting epidemics. All you have to do is find them.[47] In this contribution, I have tried to demonstrate that Erasmus was one of those exceptional people for the success of New Ancient Greek in early sixteenth-century elite culture, despite his small corpus. Through his network he made sure that Greek composition reached a critical mass, a mass that could clearly distinguish itself from the work of non-Hellenists by language. Writing Greek helped to create a sense of an elite community with a separate identity, which brings to mind Gladwell's Law of the Few. In future research, scholars should try to think of ways to invalidate my hypothesis, for instance by comparing how much Erasmus' New Ancient Greek output was read in comparison to other authors. This proportional comparison, however, requires at least some quantitative data, currently still lacking because there are no accurate numbers of the output in New Ancient Greek, although it seems that the period between 1550 and 1650, roughly the century after Erasmus' demise, was particularly productive. With more accurate data one would be able to find out how much this output grew during Erasmus' lifetime, and thus map the relative impact of his activities, or perhaps lack thereof, in greater detail. Did Erasmus' Greek compositions bring about a tipping point? Was there really a snowball effect as suggested by the epitaph tradition in Leuven?

The fragmentary evidence gathered here indicates that a tipping point occurred in Erasmus' day and age, although it was surely not as instantaneous as Gladwell's modern conception of it would want it to be. Indeed, as a potential superspreader, Erasmus seems to have released Greek writing from the realm of isolated talents such as Filelfo and Poliziano and the close-knit Aldine academy, promoting it among a broader circle of scholars beyond the Alps, especially in Switzerland and in the Low Countries. This process, however, took several decades, as in the wake of Erasmus, whose verses could not compete with those of his Italian and Greek colleagues in terms of poetic quality, Greek was popularized as a scholarly and literary medium, albeit still to a limited extent. One of Erasmus' main contributions may have been that he

46 See the edition in Feys and Van Rooy 2020.

47 Gladwell 2000: 132.

helped remove the mental barrier to writing in Greek by composing poems in relatively plain language, thus lowering the bar for future scholars to adopt this medium.

Even if Gladwell's modern framework is not entirely suitable to capturing events of half a millennium ago, first and foremost because the speed of change is far greater today than it was in the past, it can still be a useful analytical lens. After all, Gladwell's concepts encourage the researcher to look at historical events from a refreshing perspective. I have tried to make a case for Erasmus as a superspreader, but I might as well have started from a different Gladwellian role, for instance that of connector, since Erasmus had many weak ties with humanists across Europe, introducing them to each other and possible sponsors. Moreover, he fulfilled the roles of a natural salesman, using his rhetorical skills to promote a Greek-based humanist program, and maven, as he translated manuals from Greek into Latin, thus transmitting the necessary knowledge to aspiring Greek writers as an 'information broker'.[48] I chose the perspective of superspreader not only because the term has been popularized in light of recent global events but also because it encompasses these other Gladwellian roles. As such, starting from the role of superspreader offered the greatest argumentative challenge to take on.

Obviously, Erasmus was not a lone wolf in promoting Greek writing. Not only did he find an audience open to this practice, but he was helped by numerous other agents of change, animate and inanimate, both types deserving further study. I offer some pointers here. In the animate category, I should mention earlier New Ancient Greek poets, especially Erasmus' Italian predecessors Filelfo and Poliziano. Notably, the Ghent-born scholar Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655), one of the most prolific Greek poets of the Low Countries, cited these and other pioneers, including the Greeks Marcus Musurus and especially Janus Lascaris.[49] In order to better assess Erasmus' agency, one would need more research into his relative importance compared to the Italians' and the Greeks' as well as to that of representatives of the strong traditions in France, Switzerland, and the Holy Roman Empire.

Other animate agents include scribes and readers-owners, at whose mercy New Ancient Greek texts also were; their survival and circulation depended on the persons copying and recommending them. A scribe found it worthwhile to copy the abovementioned epitaphs in honor of Rutger Rescius, whereas several readers of Erasmus' epitaph for Jacob Batt were charmed by the punchy second line of the poem. Because it tersely conveyed a key element

48 Gladwell 2000: 69.

49 Lamers and Van Rooy 2022a: 254.

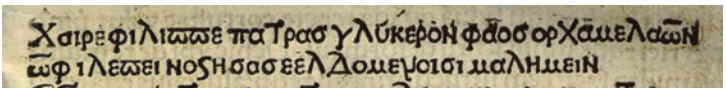
of Christian eschatology—a good life and death leads to resurrection in the Last Judgment—the readers took the verse out of its original context and circulated it in a new one. In the process, they endorsed the use of Greek as a valid medium far removed from its ancient heartland, in both time and place. Even more important than scribes and perhaps even readers were printers like Johann Bebel, who held sway over what was published, the disposition of items in the book, and the timeline of publication. In dialogue with the authors of the manuscripts, and taking into account market demands and readers' expectations, they determined what was commercially viable, and at what speed books were typeset and printed, as the Erasmus-Grynaeus dialogue reveals. Moreover, publishers set prices and co-determined who could afford what. Although the first half of the sixteenth century witnessed a commercialization of Greek books, readers' budgets were often still limited, so many of them would have been forced to carefully consider their investments.[50] The New Ancient Greek fashion clearly survived this selection process, probably because texts in this language were almost never printed separately in this early period. They were present in many publications whether the readership wanted them or not.[51] This brings me to two important human-made inanimate agents that I should mention briefly: texts and fonts, which have no intention of their own but can nonetheless prompt humans to do something.

On the one hand, texts take on a life of their own, after their authors release them to the public. Even if the authors' names often remain attached to their compositions it is often the texts in and of themselves which invite readers to do something with them. This is particularly true of genres such as prayers (poem 3) and dialogues (poem 7). Erasmus' epitaph for Uutenhove (poem 6), once printed, triggered a Greek reply from Oridryus. By inviting action, these texts led to oral performances and written responses. On the other hand, printed texts used different Greek fonts, which developed through time and varied geographically.[52] Grossly generalizing, it can be stated that experience and craftsmanship led to an overall increase in aesthetic appeal of these fonts, which over time came to resemble the contemporary hands of accomplished Greek scribes. They changed from an artificial and analytical to a smooth

50 On Greek printing as an economic niche, with special reference to sixteenth-century France and the Southern Low Countries, see Constantinidou 2015. On the printing press as an agent more generally, see Helmers et al. 2021, and den Haan (this volume, p. 205, 207).

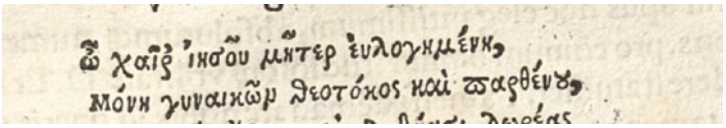
51 On the liminal nature of such poems, see van Dam 2009: esp. 118–122, who speaks broadly of liminary poems in the early modern Low Countries, but also mentions Greek specimens.

52 See Mastoridis 1998 for a bird's-eye overview.



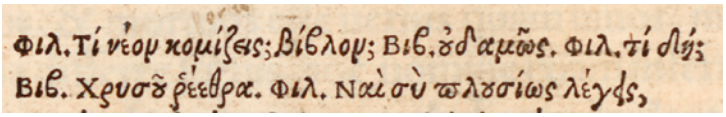
Poem 2 – 1504

(Credit: Munich, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek – public domain)



Poem 3 – 1515

(Credit: Munich, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek – CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)



Poem 7 – 1531

(Credit: Universitätsbibliothek Basel – public domain)

FIGURE 10.3 Sample of Greek font development in Erasmus' corpus

appearance where letters were combined through artful ligatures.[53] Although this is of course a matter of taste, and such an assessment will always remain impressionistic, it will be difficult for most observers to deny the growing elegance of the fonts used for the editions of Erasmus' poems shown in Figure 10.3. This evolution, moreover, reflects the willingness of publishers to invest in ever better fonts, and by consequence Greek texts.

This development is also likely to have stimulated the New Ancient Greek fashion in the sense that texts in this language, in addition to being tokens of erudition and time investment of a busy scholar, became an appealing adornment of books. Something similar might hold true for scribal hands in manuscripts. Fonts and hands might, therefore, have been one of the critical details contributing to the popularity of Greek writing.

Erasmus and these other agents brought about change, but to what extent can the adoption of an ancient language in the sixteenth century be regarded as an actual innovation? This is the last question I want to consider here. Judging by his slogan *Ad fontes*, Erasmus wanted renewal by dismissing medieval scholasticism in favor of antiquity, especially the Greeks. If we return to Greek texts for our intellectual and cultural program, Erasmus seems to have thought, we might as well adopt their linguistic medium on the way. The Greek

53 The increase in aesthetic appeal of Greek fonts is, for instance, clear from the discussion in Vervliet 2008 of early Greek types in France.

output of Erasmus and his colleagues is therefore typical of the 'past-anchored renewal' characterizing humanism, an idea some later humanists captured with the Greek neologism *kainopalaios* (καινοπάλαιος), 'new-old'.[54]

The success of this humanist paradigm, and the New Ancient Greek fashion that was part of it, could not have been the product of scholars devoting their spare time to this intellectual program in their ivory towers. The final word, therefore, should be on the power of context. Erasmus found scholars across Europe who were open to learning a new language and willing to appropriate the heritage of a distant culture from their Byzantine teachers. The printing press boosted the production of accessible manuals and the circulation of Greek texts. The Protestant maxim of *sola scriptura* guaranteed an enduring interest in studying and using Greek in a Christian context, and the language became institutionalized especially in Protestant schools but also in other parts of Europe. In fact, it was in pre-Protestant Europe that the first Greek chairs were installed, in Alcalá de Henares (1514) and Leuven (1517), although in both cases it took some time before adequate chair-holders were found. Other important early chairs include Wittenberg (1518) and Paris (1530).[55] Even New Ancient Greek itself became institutionalized to some extent, since the language came to serve as the medium of academic dissertations and ceremonies in numerous centers of learning across Europe. Erasmus, who did not live to see this evolution in full bloom, had tried to motivate Rutger Rescius, the Greek professor in Leuven, to actively use the language at the Three-Language College, as I have highlighted (Section 3.3). However, it remains to be studied to what extent Erasmus' advice was followed, and more broadly whether the case I have made here for Erasmus as an unsuspected superspreader of New Ancient Greek will stand up to further scrutiny.

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54 I adopt the phrase 'past-anchored renewal' from Lamers 2017: 207. For καινοπάλαιος, see Lamers and Van Rooy 2022b: 106 n. 141; Van Rooy 2023: 21–22.

55 See the survey in Van Hal 2022.

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Index of Subjects

Who or what makes innovation spread? Ten case-studies from Greco-Roman Antiquity and the early modern period address human and non-human agency in innovation. Was Erasmus the 'superspreader' of the use of New Ancient Greek? How did a special type of clamp contribute to architectural innovation in Delphi? What agents helped diffuse a new festival culture in the eastern parts of the Roman empire? How did a context of status competition between scholars and poets at the Ptolemaic court help deify a lock of hair? Examples from different societal domains illuminate different types of agency in historical innovation.

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