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## Villerías' Latin Translation of Alessandra Scala's Greek Epigram to Poliziano and the Translation Wars in Mexico

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### Abstract

The Reserved Collection of the National Library of Mexico holds a previously unpublished manuscript (Ms 1594) that contains the Latin and Greek works of a New Spanish poet, José de Villerías y Roelas (1695-1728). It is undoubtedly the most important document known to us, written in Greek and produced in New Spain during the colonial period. To date, no other New Spanish materials containing original compositions in Greek have been located or studied; nor are we aware of any collection of Greek poems anthologised by a New Spanish Hellenist. Hence the manuscript stands as a kind of *codex unicus* for New Spanish Hellenism. In this paper, I publish and analyse one of the poems, the longest of Villerías' collection of Greek poetry, and his Latin translation. In the manuscript, the epigram in question is attributed to the distinguished and renowned humanist of the Italian Quattrocento, Alessandra Scala, who composed it in response to one of Angelo Poliziano's poems dedicated to her. Before analysing Villerías' text and translation, I trace Poliziano's reception in New Spain and explore Villerías' possible engagement with Poliziano's *Liber Epigrammatum Graecorum*. Finally, I discuss the various approaches to the translation of Greek texts in Mexico from the colonial period to the present day. The aim is to stimulate debates about classical reception in post-colonial and peripheral contexts and to present the politics in which classicism became institutionalised in contemporary Mexico.

### Keywords

Villerías; Early Eighteenth-century Mexico; Translation of Greek and Latin; Poliziano; Classical Receptions in Mexico; New Spanish Hellenism; Alessandra Scala

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## Introduction

The unpublished Ms 1594, preserved in the Reserved Collection of the National Library of Mexico, contains works composed in Latin and Greek by New Spain poet José de Villerías y Roelas (1695-1728).<sup>1</sup> To date, no other New Spanish materials containing original compositions in Greek have been located or studied; nor are scholars aware of any collection or manuscript of Greek poems anthologised by a Novohispanic Hellenist. Hence, this manuscript is a *codex unicus* of Novohispanic Hellenism and, undoubtedly, the most important extant document written in Greek and produced in New Spain during the colonial period.<sup>2</sup>

Born in Mexico City the year Sor Juana died (1695),<sup>3</sup> a descendant of a poor Spanish family, Villerías studied jurisprudence (not without financial difficulties) at the Royal and Pontifical University, where he graduated in 1724. Two years later, he obtained a position as a lawyer in the Royal Court but died prematurely in 1728 at the age of 33.<sup>4</sup> In his short life, Villerías managed to publish some of his works, such as his *Descripción de la máscara y paseo* (1721),<sup>5</sup> an entire book dedicated to Fray José de las Heras on his election to the chair of theology at the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico.<sup>6</sup> For this commission, Villerías composed two poems, one comprising 300 hexameters in Latin, and another in Spanish, both entitled *Victor*.<sup>7</sup> Also in Spanish, Villerías published *Llanto de las estrellas al ocaso del sol anochechido en el oriente* (The Weeping of the Stars at the Darkened Sunset in the West) to commemorate the death of King Louis I (1725).<sup>8</sup> In 1728,

<sup>1</sup> The only existing monograph on this manuscript and the work of Villerías is Osorio Romero (1991), which contains a chapter on Villerías' Hellenism (pp. 69-80). Before Osorio Romero tasked himself with salvaging Villerías' poetry from oblivion (Osorio Romero, 1983), references to Villerías were reduced to the reproduction of the Spanish version of his poem *Victor* (particularly the section entitled *Máscara* [Mask]) in de la Maza (1968: 153-156); earlier in Beristáin de Souza (1821/1981: 329-331), whereas more appear in eighteenth-century works, among which the most significant is Eguiara y Eguren, 1746; 1755. More discussion in Osorio Romero, 1991: 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Another important name for eighteenth-century New Spain Hellenism is Don Cayetano de Cabrera y Quintero (1700?-1774). Eguiara y Eguren attributes to him a grammar of Greek and Hebrew, now lost, in which he instructed readers on the alphabets of these two languages in Latin hexameters. Beristáin (1816 [1980]: 232) reports that he wrote a *Liber variorum epigrammatum e Graeco in Latinum translatorum* (now lost too). At the end of his entry on Don Cayetano, Beristáin says that most of his manuscripts were preserved in Eguiara y Eguren's time in the library of the fathers of the Oratorio de México, but that by his time barely half of them had survived. The Carmelite Father Manuel de San Juan Crisóstomo declared in 1842 that Don Cayetano was 'the greatest Hellenist we have ever had' (Osorio Romero, 1991: 81).

<sup>3</sup> Villerías himself dedicated a poem to Sor Juana, number XCI of his collection of original Latin epigrams (Ms 1594, fol. 83v), in which he celebrates her as the 'memorable name of the feminine sex' (*foeminei nomen memorabile sexus*).

<sup>4</sup> Full biographical information gathered in Osorio Romero, 1991: 9-20.

<sup>5</sup> The full title is *Descripción de la Mascara, y Paseo con que la Real Universidad, Nobleza, y pueblo de esta imperial Corte de México, celebró la Possession de la Cathedra de Visperas de Theologia que obtuvo el R<sup>mo</sup>. P. M. Fr. Joseph de las Heras*.

<sup>6</sup> This type of compositions were part of the festive procedures that followed the official installation of the winner. José de las Heras, a Mercedarian priest and prominent theologian, won the contest in 1721, and he possibly entrusted the 26-year-old Villerías with the composition of this work (Osorio Romero, 1991: 29-44).

<sup>7</sup> According to Villerías (fol. 6r), it was José Diego Medina Picazo, treasurer of the Royal Mint, who asked him to include a Spanish translation of his Latin poem. Two versions of the Latin poem are preserved: the published version printed in this 1721 book, and a corrected version with added notes, preserved in the 1594 manuscript dated October 1723.

<sup>8</sup> This is a historical account of the ceremonies held in Mexico to commemorate the funeral of the king. Villerías collected funerary epigrams written for the deceased king, wherein twenty-eight were composed by Francisco Xavier de Cárdenas. A Latin and Castilian poet trained by the Jesuits, de Cárdenas had been entrusted with composing poems and inscriptions for the funeral pyre, and writing an account of the entire event. For unknown reasons, the latter task was passed to Villerías, who described the ceremonies, commented on the six Latin inscriptions and the twenty emblems on the funeral pyre, included the sermon in Latin by the elected Archbishop of Manila, Carlos Bermúdez de Castro, and the sermon in Castilian by the Archbishop of Mexico, José de Lanciego y Eguiuz, and concluded his account with a Latin elegy (his own composition, also included in Ms 1594) that closes with two elegiac couplets in Greek (Osorio Romero, 1991: 45-68).

a posthumous publication of his *Escudo triunfante del caramelo* appeared, a versification in royal octaves of the homonymous work of the Carmelite friar of Madrid, Fray Gabriel Cerrada.<sup>9</sup> Some Latin compositions by Villerías reached the press, and all of them appear in the manuscript under examination here. But, with the sole exception of the two Greek elegiac couplets with which Villerías culminates his long Latin elegy in honour of Louis I, published in the book *Llanto de las estrellas al ocaso del sol anochecido en el oriente* (1725, 143v),<sup>10</sup> the entire poetic production written in Greek by Villerías and his translations from Greek into Latin are exclusively preserved in Ms 1594.

Ms 1594 preserves a wide range of Latin compositions, a small number of original Greek epigrams, and some Latin translations of Greek poetry and prose. The contents of the manuscript are presented below. The following list is based on an autoptic review of the entire manuscript, not only on Osorio's work.<sup>11</sup> The manuscript contains three different paginations: first, the continuous pagination by the same ink and likely by the same hand that wrote the text put in the upper outer corner of each page (this numbering starts again when a new work begins and it is not very consistent, as many pages are left unnumbered); second, modern pagination by folios in blue ink consigned in the upper right-hand corner that unifies all the contents of the manuscript and only used for pages that contain text (ignoring blank pages); and third, a second modern pagination by folios in red ink at the bottom, which also unifies all the contents of the codex and begins with Arabic numerals on the first folio of the poem *Victor*, with the preceding folios numbered in Roman numerals. I follow this latter pagination as given below:

1. A rendition of the Latin poem *Victor*, with added scholarly notes (*adjectis notis et emendationibus*; fols. 1r-29r).
2. The 1752-verse-long Latin hexametric poem *Guadalupe* (fols. 31v-60r), introduced by a Latin Pindaric *ode* composed of four triads in different metres (fols. 32r-33v).<sup>12</sup>
3. One Latin *epithalamium* of 130 verses composed by Glyconics and Pherecratian strophes entitled *In nuptias serenissimorum Principum Ludovici et Aloysiae* (fols. 62r-63v).
4. A Latin hexametric poem of 50 verses (64r-64v), which is a *gratulatio* in honour of Fray José de Monreal, an Augustinian monk.
5. A 100-verses-long Latin hexametric composition entitled *Pallas* (65r-66v).
6. Three short Latin poems of six, seven, and twelve elegiac couplets, respectively. The first is framed with the title *Aenigma*, the second is dedicated to Francisco Galvez, and the third is a mnemonic game to learn the contractions of Greek vowels (66v-67v).
7. Six Latin hymns in Sapphic and Asclepiadean strophes, iambics and epodic-iambic strophes (67v-70v).
8. Ninety-eight original Latin epigrams, written by Villerías (72r-84v).
9. Nine original Greek epigrams, written by Villerías (86r-86v).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Osorio Romero, 1989: 371.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that Greek characters were not printed with movable types but probably by etching of handwritten letters on a plate. We know that Hogal's printing press came to have Greek types (Sarabia Viejo, 2008: 457), but this must have happened after the printing of *Llanto de las estrellas*. The writing of the Greek notoriously matches that of Ms 1594.

<sup>11</sup> Osorio Romero, 1991: 383-407.

<sup>12</sup> The only existing edition of *Guadalupe* is Osorio Romero (1991), which contains a complete study of the poem (chapter VII: 195-257). For a discussion of Villerías' Neo-Latin poem *Guadalupe* for the English-speaking world, Laird (2010). For the history of Mexican literature, this practically unknown and scarcely studied poem is a turning point between the Baroque and Neoclassical periods, and a prelude to the Mexican Jesuit Enlightenment.

<sup>13</sup> Berruecos Frank, 2022, for a critical edition and study of Villerías' epigram dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe and two more of his epigrams.



10. A collection of twenty-two Greek poems with Villerías' Latin translations (87r-90v).
11. Three short Latin prose compositions grouped under the title *Farrago* (93r-100r).<sup>14</sup>
12. A Latin hexametric versification of the *Vulgate's* version of the *Song of Songs* (fols. 105r-113r).
13. A long Latin elegy comprising 123 couplets dedicated to the deceased King Louis I (fols. 113v-117v).<sup>15</sup>
14. A Latin letter to the physician Jacobus Stevenson (fols. 119r-121v).
15. A Latin translation of the treatise *De dialectis linguae Graecae* by Gregory of Corinth (125r-136v).
16. Finally, some reading notes (142r-147v).<sup>16</sup>

From the small section of the manuscript devoted to the collection of twenty-two Greek poems grouped under the title *Graecorum Poetarum Poematia aliquot Latina facta* (fols. 87r-90v), only eight feature in the *Anthologia Planudea*.<sup>17</sup> This indicates that Villerías' selection was not based solely on its editions to which he possibly had access, but rather that he included compositions from other sources.<sup>18</sup> The fourteen poems not featuring in the *Planudea* form a very heterogeneous and eclectic group of texts: an epigram attributed to Lucian (1);<sup>19</sup> two tetrastichs and two couplets by Theognis (2-5); a hexametric hexastich prefixed to the Digest (6);<sup>20</sup> Mimnermos' famous poem to Aphrodite (7);<sup>21</sup> a couplet by

<sup>14</sup> The first one is entitled *Unde, quando et quomodo huiusce Americae incolae propagati fuerint*; the second: *De basilisco*; the third: *De caesura carminis elegiaci*.

<sup>15</sup> Published in *El llanto de las estrellas* (1725).

<sup>16</sup> With the exception of *Guadalupe*, the original Greek epigrams (Rojas, 1983; Berruecos Frank, 2022) and Villerías' Latin translations of the Greek poems (Rojas and Quiñones, 1983), the contents of the manuscript have not been published. Osorio Romero includes some Latin epigrams and some verses of other Latin compositions, but a critical edition remains elusive.

<sup>17</sup> Poem 8 (PI I<sup>b</sup> 14.6 = AP 9.437) is composed of two couplets from an eighteen-line epigram attributed to Theocritus (Gow 4). Poem 9 (PI VII.136 = AP 5.94) is a couplet from an epigram attributed to the epigrammatist Rufinus. Poem 10 (PI III<sup>a</sup> 6.23 = AP 7.524) is a couplet from an epigram of Callimachos. Poem 13 (PI IV<sup>a</sup> 11.4 [AP 16.155]) is a monostich attributed to Euodos. Poem 15 (PI III<sup>a</sup> 22.3 = AP 7.3) is an epitaph of Homer. Poem 16 (PI IV<sup>a</sup> 29.10 [AP 16.301]) is a couplet by Antipatros of Sidon dedicated to Homer, as is poem 17 (PI IV<sup>a</sup> 29.4 [AP 16.295]) and, finally, poem 22 (PI I<sup>a</sup> 13.10 = AP 10.84) is an epigram comprising two couplets by Palladas of Alexandria. Of these eight poems included in the *Anthologia Planudea*, five are also included in the *Anthologia Palatina* (Villerías 8, 9, 10, 15 and 22). The first edition of the *Palatina* by R. F. P. Brunck was not published until 1772-1776 and later by F. Jacobs (1794, 1813-1817).

<sup>18</sup> It is possible that Villerías had access to some editions of the *Anthologia Planudea*. Two copies of the 1606 Greek-Latin bilingual edition printed in Geneva (*ΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΗΡΩΙΚΗΣ ΠΟΙΗΣΕΩΣ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΙ ΠΟΙΗΤΑΙ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ* = *Poetae graeci veteres carminis heroici scriptores, qui extant omnes*) are preserved, one in the Biblioteca Palafoxiana at Puebla, the other in the Biblioteca Pública Central del Estado de Durango, as well as one more copy of the bilingual edition of 1614 printed in Geneva also in the Palafoxiana (*ΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ ΠΟΙΗΤΑΙ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΙ. ΤΡΑΓΙΚΟΙ. ΚΩΜΙΚΟΙ. ΛΥΡΙΚΟΙ. ΕΠΙΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΠΟΙΟΙ* = *Poetae graeci veteres, tragici, lyri, comici, epigrammatarii*) which bears the fire mark of the Colegio de San Juan, so it probably belonged to the Jesuits of Puebla since the seventeenth century. I was unable to find any evidence for the existence in New Spain of copies of the anthologies of Greek epigrams by Joannes Soter (1525) and Janus Cornarius (1529), which could well have been models for Villerías, as both contain the authors' Latin translations.

<sup>19</sup> On likely sources available to Villerías for the reproduction of this epigram, Berruecos Frank, 2022: n. 27. This is the only epigram attributed to Lucian that has not been transmitted through either the *Palatina* or the *Planudea* (Baldwin, 1975: 311-335). Villerías could have read this epigram in one of Lucian's editions that arrived in New Spain, many of which had this epigram as a preface to Lucian's dialogues.

<sup>20</sup> A 1562 edition of the Digest published in Paris is preserved in the Palafoxiana library at Puebla bearing the fire mark of the Colegio de San Juan. This edition reproduced this Greek epigram on its first page with a Latin translation in hexameters by Andrea Alciato. It is very likely that Villerías collected this poem from this edition. Its inclusion, along with the epigram by A. Scala, constitutes a further connection to Poliziano's work, because the Tuscan poet had studied the primary manuscript of the Digest (known as the Pisan-Florentine *Pandectas*) in depth and made philological annotations. It should be no coincidence that two of the Greek poems included by Villerías have a connection to the person and philological work of Poliziano (see note 36).

<sup>21</sup> Villerías may have read these verses (*Mimnermi de Venere* = fr. 1.1-2 West) in Plut. *Mor.* 445f, as the text seems to coincide with Plutarch's version.

Simonides (11); the Renaissance epigram by Alessandra Scala (12); a couplet on Homer's homeland transmitted by Cicero and Aulus Gellius (14); an epigram for Hesiod attributed to Pindar (18); two epigrams dedicated to Nonnos of Panopolis (19 and 20: one by Florus and the other by the sixteenth-century Flemish classicist Karel Van Utenhove); and, finally, two anonymous couplets transmitted within Aeschines' *Against Ctesiphon* (21).<sup>22</sup>

In this paper, I present and analyse one of the poems, the longest of Villerías' collection of Greek poetry, and his Latin translation. As briefly discussed above, it has come down to us under the name of a distinguished and renowned humanist of the Italian Quattrocento, the poet Alessandra Scala, who may have composed it in response to one of the epigrams Angelo Poliziano dedicated to her. Before presenting and analysing Villerías' text and translation, I trace Poliziano's presence in New Spain and explore whether and how Villerías had been aware of Poliziano's *Liber Epigrammatum Graecorum*. Finally, I offer some considerations of the translation of classical languages in Mexico and some concluding remarks about the intellectual environment wherein the elaboration of Villerías manuscript took place.

## Poliziano in Spain and New Spain

The inclusion of Alessandra Scala's epigram in Villerías' collection of Greek poems is, to the best of my knowledge, the most vital piece of information about the reception of Poliziano's poetry in New Spain. Since the epigram is included in the editions of Poliziano's complete works (in a section entitled *Liber Epigrammatum Graecorum*),<sup>23</sup> knowledge of it must have been mediated by reading his Greek epigrams.<sup>24</sup>

We know that the Neo-Latin Poliziano was read and appreciated in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, clearly evinced by the commentary of Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas (known as the Brocense) on the *Silvae*, published in Salamanca in 1554,<sup>25</sup> and also by his references to the Latin Poliziano in his *Comentarios* to Garcilaso and quotations from the *Silva Rusticus*.<sup>26</sup> It is important to

<sup>22</sup> The handwriting in the penultimate poem of this Greek collection (fol. 91r, epigram XXI) differs considerably from that used in all other poems (cf. Rojas and Quiñones, 1983: 231). Some ligatures appear that are not used in the other folios, yet the Latin handwriting is not significantly different. It seems that it is the same hand but for some reason, the scribe selected a different style for this poem (perhaps influenced by the source from which the text was copied). A 1604 edition of the works of Demosthenes and Aeschines published in Frankfurt (*Demosthenis et Aeschinis Principum graeciae oratorum opera*; previously belonged to the royal colleges of San Pedro and San Juan and now kept at the Palafoxiana Library at Puebla) preserves epigram XXI (p. 459, transmitted in Aeschines' *Contra Ctesiphontem*). The type of writing is very similar to that of the manuscript of Villerías, as if the scribe of Villerías' manuscript had copied it from there.

<sup>23</sup> Poliziano's section of Greek epigrams appears as early as the *Editio Aldina* of 1498. It is the last work in the volume entitled *Omnia Opera Angeli Politiani, et alia quaedam lectu digna*, published in Venice.

<sup>24</sup> The reception of Poliziano in the literature and poetry of New Spain has attracted little scholarly attention. Laird (2003: 170-171 and n. 6) briefly discusses the use of a Polizianic poetic device in F. X. Alegre's *Alexandreid*. Laird argues that in *Alex* 4.574-586, the transition from the mythical past to the poet's present is reminiscent of Poliziano's *Ambra* 590 ff. Furthermore, Laird (2006: 47) highlights the influence of Poliziano's *Rusticus* on Rafael Landívar's *Rusticatio mexicana*. The relationship between Poliziano's denomination of his Latin hexametric compositions as *Silvae* and the genre of the *silva* cultivated in the Gongorine poetry of New Spain, particularly in Sor Juana's *Primero Sueño*, deserves more attention than has hitherto attracted. Tenorio (2017: 285, n. 643), in a note to verse 627 of the *Primero Sueño* regarding the attestation of Themis, alludes to Poliziano's *Nutricia* as a possible model. Sor Juana, in her *Neptuno Alegórico* (1976: 361), mentions Poliziano and refers to chapter 83 of his *Miscellanea* in relation to the identification of the Egyptian god Harpocrates as the Greek god Sigalion.

<sup>25</sup> *Scholia Francisci Sanctii Brocensis, In Sylvas Angeli Politiani*. See Merino Jerez, 1996.

<sup>26</sup> *Obras del Excelente Poeta Garci Lasso de la Vega. Con anotaciones y enmiendas del Licenciado Francisco Sánchez, cathédrico de rhetorica*. See Ramajo Caño, 1992: 44.

note, as evidence of the interest in Poliziano's Neo-Latin poetry, a Spanish edition of the *Silvae* (most likely published in Alcalá de Henares), currently preserved in the British Library, which was previously believed to have been published in Lyon.<sup>27</sup> Two more editions of the *Silvae* were published in Salamanca in the sixteenth century: by Andrea de Portonariis in 1554 and by Pedro Lasso in 1596.<sup>28</sup>

Several copies of different editions of Poliziano's complete works certainly reached New Spain.<sup>29</sup> Currently, the Palafoxiana Library in Puebla preserves an *incunabulum* of the Aldina edition of 1498, as well as two copies, one dated to 1528 and the other to 1550, of the edition printed in Lyon by Sebastian Gryphius, and another copy of the Basel edition of 1553 printed by Nicolaus Episcopius.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the Francisco de Burgoa Library in Oaxaca keeps a copy of the 1546 Lyon edition.<sup>31</sup> The Aldine (1498) and Basel editions (1553) print the *Liber Epigrammatum Graecorum* together with the response of Alessandra Scala.<sup>32</sup> It is to be expected that the 1550 edition does not include Volume III, as no copies of this particular edition which includes Volume III, have been found in any library.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the 1546 edition preserved in Oaxaca also contains the *Liber Epigrammatum Graecorum* (see below).

Jacques Toussain was the first to translate Poliziano's Greek epigrams into Latin in the Ascensian edition (Paris, 1519).<sup>34</sup> Toussain, an eminent humanist linked to the circle of Budé and the first professor of Greek at the Royal College of Paris, translated all the Greek passages of Poliziano's work.<sup>35</sup> Villerías himself, in the dedication of his *Descripción de la máscara, y paseo*, mentions Budé along with Andrea Alciato as paradigms of the fecundity that the study of the ancients impart to the field of law. Villerías' training in jurisprudence, which is reflected in the inclusion of the epigram of the Digest in his collection of Greek poems (see n. 20 above), could have led him to study the *Annotationes* Budé made to the Digest, a copy of whose 1534 edition published in Basel is preserved in the Biblioteca

<sup>27</sup> Rhodes, 1989. This is an uncatalogued book held at the British Library containing the four *Silvae* of Poliziano, most likely printed by the famous printer of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, Arnao Guillén de Brocar, and published between 1515 and 1520.

<sup>28</sup> De Portonariis' edition is entitled *Angeli Politiani Syluae: Nutricia, Manto, Rusticus, Ambra: poema quidem obscurum, sed nouis nunc scholiis illustratum per Franciscum Sanctium Brocensem* (Salamanca, 1554); Lasso's: *Angeli Politiani Silvae. Nutricia, Manto, Rusticus, Ambra. Cum scholiis Francisci Sanctii Brocensis* (Salamanca, 1596). An edition of De Portonariis, printed in Salamanca in 1554, entitled *Dialectica Aristotelis*, and preserved in the Armando Olivares Carrillo Library of the University of Guanajuato, contains the *Organon cum argumentiis Politiani*.

<sup>29</sup> Full discussion and compendium of the printed editions of Poliziano that included the entire *Liber epigrammatum graecorum* or some epigrams or groups of epigrams, in Pontani, 2002: lxx-xcii.

<sup>30</sup> The *incunabulum* became part of the collection of the Palafoxiana Library in the eighteenth century, when the bishop of Puebla, Francisco Fabián y Fuero, confiscated the books of the Jesuits after their expulsion from Mexico. Originally, this volume belonged to the Jesuits of Puebla and probably entered New Spain in the seventeenth century. The other three editions of Poliziano in the Palafoxiana, all dated to the sixteenth century, are registered in the manuscript catalogues after the seventeenth century. I am very grateful to Elvia Carreño for her help in these matters and, in particular, for her valuable indications on the fire marks.

<sup>31</sup> This edition, as its fire mark affirms, was part of the second group of works that formed the library of the Convent of Santo Domingo of Oaxaca (seventeenth century).

<sup>32</sup> I was not able to review the 1528 edition in Puebla and establish the inclusion of Greek epigrams. The catalographic information does not indicate if the library holds the first tome only (in which case it cannot contain the Greek epigrams) or the third tome too. As Pontani indicates (2002: lxxiii-lxxiv), Gryphius printed the three volumes of Poliziano's work on several occasions between 1528 and 1550. Still, it seems that he did not always print all three at the same time since only single volumes are known today.

<sup>33</sup> Pontani, 2002: lxxiv.

<sup>34</sup> Pontani, 2002: 254-257. Before Toussain, only two Latin versions of the epigram XXI by Hummelberg in the sixteenth century are known, preserved in the manuscript Mon. Lat. 4007 (Pontani, 2002: 253).

<sup>35</sup> Pontani, 2002: 254.

Palafoxiana at Puebla.<sup>36</sup> The link between Budé and Toussain, coupled with Villerías' admiration for Budé and his penchant for Latin translations of Greek poetry, speaks in favour of Villerías' particular interest in Toussain's translations. These translations feature in the editions printed in Lyon by Gryphius and in the Basel edition of 1553, in the appendix entitled *Latina interpretatio eorum que graece habentur in Angeli Politiani operibus* (pp. 644-665). Toussain's translations, due to their lack of elegance and literalism, are not particularly enjoyable.<sup>37</sup> It is very likely that Villerías consulted these translations and attempted to improve them (and keep the poetic form of the original, contrary to Toussain).

Translations and imitations of Poliziano were scarce in the eighteenth century, a period of drastic decline in readings of his Greek poetry compared to the previous centuries.<sup>38</sup> Hence, a Latin translation composed thousands of miles away in the colonial periphery of New Spain is in itself a remarkable finding for Poliziano studies. It is worth emphasising, however, that Villerías decided to select for his collection not a Greek epigram of Poliziano, but Alessandra Scala's response, thus endowing his collection with a strange, surely little-known element in New Spain.

Villerías modelled his undertaking to anthologise Greek poems with his Latin translations on Renaissance projects of recovering Greek poetic heritage. By selecting and integrating a Greek epigram from one of the *decus Italiae virgines*,<sup>39</sup> Villerías proclaimed his subscription to a movement of revitalisation of Greek that asserted to be analogous to that of Quattrocento Italy across the ocean. Nevertheless, this urgency to revive Greek poetry and composition remained cloistered in a manuscript that never reached the printing press and remained unknown for decades, as if its fate reflected the fate of knowledge and interest in Greek language and literature in New Spain.

### Alessandra Scala's Greek Epigram to Poliziano in Villerías' Manuscript (Epigram XII)

Born in 1475, Alessandra Scala was a highly cultivated woman with outstanding knowledge of classical languages.<sup>40</sup> Alessandra studied Greek close to two of the most prestigious Hellenists of the Florentine Quattrocento, Janus Laskaris and Demetrios Chalkokondyles, and she was also a student of Poliziano himself. Unfortunately, only two of her works survive: the Greek epigram to Poliziano and a letter in Latin addressed to Cassandra Fedele, a Venetian learned woman who corresponded with Poliziano and Alessandra's father, Bartolomeo Scala.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Annotationes in quatuor et viginti pandectarum libros*. The copy bears the fire mark of the Colegio de San Juan, which again suggests it belonged to the Jesuits of Puebla perhaps since the seventeenth century. Villerías probably knew and read this copy.

<sup>37</sup> Pontani, 2002: 256.

<sup>38</sup> Pontani, 2002: 264-267. Only a French translation of an epigram (LIII) by Louis Chavannes de Rancé around 1700, a Latin translation of the same epigram by Anton Maria Salvini in the first half of the century, and a cento combining verses of epigrams III and XXVI by G. C. Astori and published in 1760, are preserved.

<sup>39</sup> Poliziano opens his first letter to Cassandra Fedele with a phrase reminiscent of the words Turnus addresses to Camilla (Vir. Aen. 11.508). Cf. Jardine, 1985.

<sup>40</sup> Pesenti (1925) collects all the information we have about Alessandra. Robin, Larsen et al. (2007: 332-333) also contains important information and the most relevant bibliography. Jardine (1985) analyses in depth the life and work of five distinguished intellectual women of the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century (I. Nogarola, C. Varano, C. Fedele, L. Cereta, and A. Scala) and, in particular, the way in which specialised studies on Italian humanism have indulgently viewed them as a construct, that of the refined and educated woman, always in the shadow of the male, thus degrading their achievements and contributions to culture and humanism as secondary works of learned women admired and praised by the great male humanists. The much more recent study by Feng (2017) approaches Poliziano's epigrams to Scala and her epigram to him from a feminist perspective and as part of the broader context of humanist Petrarchism. Following Jardine, Feng (2017: 95-96) analyses the mechanisms through which Poliziano depersonalises first Fedele and then Scala by turning them into a kind of archetype of feminine worth.

<sup>41</sup> Pesenti, 1925: 249.



The textual tradition of the epigram is twofold. On the one hand, it is preserved in the Aldina edition of Poliziano's complete works published in 1498 (and in the successive editions dependent on it), whose section containing the *Liber Epigrammatum Graecorum* was edited by Zanobi Acciaiuoli, a Dominican friar and scholar of the Greek language.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, it is included without indication of authorship or addressee in an autograph manuscript by Janus Lascaris (the Vaticanus Graecus 1412, fol. 62).<sup>43</sup> Some scholars attribute the differences between the Aldina and the Vaticanus to Poliziano, whereas others view them as inevitable corruptions of the manuscript.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps Alessandra recycled this poem, initially dedicated to Poliziano, by re-dedicating it later to Lascaris, but more probably, Lascaris might have helped Alessandra with its composition. Some parallels with Greek epigrams composed by Lascaris seem to support this hypothesis.<sup>45</sup>

The section of the manuscript 1594 entitled *Graecorum Poetarum Poematia aliquot latina facta* consists of six folios (87r-90v) containing twenty-two poems numbered with Roman numerals. The only existing edition of these poems is by Rojas and Quiñones (1983), who, after a brief introduction that does not discuss the sources of Villerías, complement their edition with Spanish translations of both Greek and Latin texts.<sup>46</sup>

Below, I present an edition of epigram XII with minor orthographic corrections, followed by a critical apparatus. In the apparatus, I record some corrections to the text supported by the readings of the Aldina, the other editions of Poliziano that reached New Spain, and the text of the Lascaris manuscript (Vat. Graec.). The latter, which nowadays are preferred by Poliziano's editors, have been included only in the critical apparatus (see above all the variants of verses 4, 12, and 14).<sup>47</sup> Essentially, I publish the text as it is in the manuscript, limiting myself to minor corrections that the reader will be able to corroborate in the apparatus (mainly the placement of accents and breathings).<sup>48</sup> Some spellings and forms in the text are not correct, but it is important to record them in this way in order to give an account of how Greek was written by this author in early eighteenth-century Mexico.

Villerías' Greek compositions, of which we only have 30 verses, contain several spelling mistakes (incorrect placement or omission of breathings and accents, confusion between consonants, e.g., θ for τ, and vowels, e.g., υ for ι) and confusion of the gender of nouns (e.g., χάον in his epigram to the Virgin of Guadalupe). Regardless, they show his good knowledge of Greek dialects, which he tries to exhibit, his adequate understanding of prosody (for his hexameters and pentameters are in most cases correctly scanned), and the use of verbal modes, despite the occasional awkward syntax.<sup>49</sup> After long consideration and much deliberation with the reviewers of the paper over the most appropriate way to publish the text, I opted to make some minor spelling corrections and abstain from invasive corrections.

<sup>42</sup> Redigonda, 1960: 93-94.

<sup>43</sup> Pontani, 2002: 143.

<sup>44</sup> Pesenti, 1925: 259; Perosa apud Pontani, 2002: 143.

<sup>45</sup> Pesenti, 1925: 258-259; Pontani, 2002: 143. One of the anonymous reviewers of this paper pointed out to me arguments supporting the view that Lascaris was probably the one who wrote this epigram to mock Poliziano's love for Alessandra.

<sup>46</sup> Rojas and Quiñones, 1983: 229-266.

<sup>47</sup> Pontani, 2002; Knox, 2019.

<sup>48</sup> The apparatus does not include all the errors in Villerías' text, but only a selection of those that were deemed the most significant. The aim was to determine the edition from which Villerías extracted the text (with particular attention to punctuation), and provide insight into the modes of learning, appropriation, and reproduction of Greek in eighteenth-century Mexico.

<sup>49</sup> Berruecos Frank, 2022.

*Alexandrae Scalae Poëtriae ad Ang. Politianum*  
*Carmen XII*

Οὐδὲν ἄρ' ἦν αἴνοιο παρ' ἔμφορος ἀνδρὸς ἄμεινον,  
κάκ σέθεν αἴνος ἔμοι γ' οἷον ἄειρε κλέος.  
πολλοὶ τριοβόλοι, παῦροι δέ τε μάντιές εἰσιν,  
εὗρες, ἄρ' οὐχ εὗρες οὐδ' ὄναρ ἠνθίασας.

φῆ γὰρ ὁ θεῖος ἀοιδὸς ἄγει θεὸς ἐς τὸν ὁμοῖον 5  
οὐδὲν ἀλεξάνδρῃ σου δ' ἀνομοιότερον.  
ὥς σὺ γ' ὅποια δανούβιος ἐκ ζόφου ἐς μέσον ἤμαρ  
καῦθις ἐπ' ἀντολίην αἰπὰ ῥέεθρα χέεις.

φωναῖς δ' ἐν πλείσταις σόντοι κλέος ἡέρ' ἔλαστρεῖ 10  
Ἑλλάδι, ῥωμαϊκῇ, ἑβραϊκῇ, λυδίῃ.  
ἄστρα, φύσις, δ' ἀριθμοί, ποιήματα, κύρβις, ἱατροὶ  
Ἀλκείδην καλέει σ' ἀντιμεθελκόμενα.

τάμα δὲ παρθενικῆς σπουδάσματα, παίγνια φασὶ 15  
Βόκχορις ἐξείποι, ἄνθεα, καὶ δρόσος ὥς.  
τοὶ γὰρ μὴδ' ἐλέφαντος ἐναντία βόμβον ἀείρω,  
αἴλουρον Παλλὰς, καὶ σύ γ' ὑπερφρονέεις.

**1** ἄρ *correx*i | ἀνδρὸς *correx*i || **2** κάκ σέθεν *et Villerías* (non κακὴν, ut aiunt Rojas-Quñones) | ἔμοι γ' 1546 Lyon, *Villerías* : ἔμοι γ' *debuerunt*, cf. *Vat.*, *Ald.*, 1553 *Bas.* || **3** τριοβόλοι 1546 Lyon, *Villerías* (non τριόβολοι, ut aiunt Rojas-Quñones) : θριοβόλοι *Vat.*, *Ald.*, 1553 *Bas.* | μάντιες 1546 Lyon, *Villerías* || **4** Εὗρες *correx*i | *virgula post* εὗρες 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.*, *Villerías*: *sine virgula*. *Ald.* | *punctum interrogationis post* ἄρ' *Vat.* | οὐχ εὗρες γ' *Vat.* | οὐδ' *correx*i | ἠνθίασας *debuit*, cf. *Vat.*, *Ald.*, 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.* || **5** ἀοιδὸς *correx*i | ἐς *Ald.*, 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.*, *Villerías* : ὡς *Vat.* || **7** ἤμαρ *debuit*, cf. *Vat.* : ἤμαρ *Ald.*, 1546 Lyon : ἤμαρ 1553 *Bas.* || **8** καῦθις *correx*i || **9** σόντοι 1546 Lyon, *Villerías* : σόντοι *debuerunt*, cf. *Vat.*, *Ald.*, 1553 *Bas.* | κλέος *correx*i *cum* *Vat.*, *Ald.*, 1553 *Bas.* : κλέως 1546 Lyon, *Villerías* *mg.* | ἡέρ *correx*i || **10** Ἑλλάδι *correx*i | λυδίῃ *Ald.*, 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.*, *Villerías* : ἰδίῃ *Vat.* || **11** ἀστρα *correx*i | φύσις, δ' 1546 Lyon, *Villerías* : φύσις δ' (*sine uirgula*) *Vat.*, *Ald.*, 1553 *Bas.* | κύρβις *et Villerías* (non κύρβεις, ut aiunt Rojas-Quñones) || **12** Ἀλκείδην καλέει σ' *Ald.*, 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.*, *Villerías* : Ἡρακλῆν καλέουσ' *Vat.* || **13** παίγνια φασὶ *correx*i : παίγνια τ' αἰνῶς *Vat.* || **14** ἐξείποι *Ald.*, 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.*, *Villerías* : εἰ κρίναις *Vat.* | ὥς *correx*i || **15** *Ald.*, 1553 *Bas.* : τοὶ γὰρ μὴδ' 1546 Lyon, *Villerías* : τοιγὰρ μήτ' *Vat.* | *virgula post* ἀείρω 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.*, *Villerías* : *sine virgula* *Vat.*, *Ald.* || **16** αἴλουρον παλλὰς *correx*i | *virgula post* Παλλὰς 1546 Lyon, 1553 *Bas.*, *Villerías* : *sine virgula* *Vat.*, *Ald.*

Nothing could be better than the praise of a wise man,  
and what fame your praise has brought me!  
Stone-casters abound, but soothsayers are scarce.  
You found [me], but rather you didn't find [me], you didn't even meet with a dream.


For as the divine poet says "the god leads [similar] to the similar" 5  
but nothing is more dissimilar to Alessandra than you.  
For, like the Danube, you make high currents flow from the West to the South  
and then again to the East.

In many languages, your fame runs through the air  
in Greek, in Latin, in Hebrew, in Lydian. 10  
The stars, nature, numbers, poetry, tablets of law and physicians  
call you Alcides, pulling you this way and that.

Mine, they say, are more like girlish studies and games,  
 Bocchoris would call them flowers as if they were dew.  
 In front of the elephant, I won't even raise a buzz,  
 but you, certainly, like Pallas, despise a kitten.

15

Leaving aside for the moment the orthographic errors – almost exclusively missing accents and breathings, erroneous collocation of accents and punctuation, and a couple of *vores nihili* (vv. 3-4), the comparison between the Aldina, the Lyon edition of 1546, and the Basel edition of 1553 suggests that Villerías possibly reproduced the text from the Lyon edition preserved in Oaxaca and consulted the Basel edition at some point. Similarities between Villerías' manuscript and the Lyon and Basel editions include the following:

- a) the use of the ligature  for the ending -ος (vv. 1, 2, 7, and 14; not used in the Aldina);
- b) the use of ζ for the consonant cluster -στ (vv. 9 and 11), which also occurs in the Aldina;
- c) the use of the ligature θ to represent the diphthong -ου (vv. 4, 6, and 13; not used in the last verses nor by the Aldina);
- d) in verse 4, they add a comma after the first εὔρες.
- e) in verse 15, they place a comma at the end of the line and in line 16, another after Παλλάς (not in the Aldina).

Still, stronger arguments demonstrate the clear dependence of the text of Villerías' manuscript on the Lyon edition:

- a) In verse 2, the scribe of our manuscript incorrectly separates the pronoun ἐμοί from the particle γε but retains the accent on the epsilon; precisely the same happens in the Lyon edition.
- b) In verse 3, both our manuscript and the Lyon edition read τριοβόλοι, an unattested form of Greek, instead of θριοβόλοι in the Aldina and Basel editions.<sup>50</sup>
- c) In verse 9, the copyist tried to make a ligature without much success, and an ink stain remained (it seems to be κλέοις).<sup>51</sup> What is striking is that in the margin, the same hand writes the *vox nihili* κλέως and it is precisely this form that the Lyon edition reads. Moreover, in the same verse, both our manuscript and the Lyon edition read the unattested form σόντοι without separating the two words (but σόν τοι in the Vat. Graec., the Aldina, and the Basel edition).
- d) In verse 11, the Aldine and Basel editions read the postpositive particle δ' after φύσις (omitted in the Vat. Graec.) but only Villerías' manuscript and the Lyon edition inexplicably add a comma between the noun and the particle. I think this error, which reveals a lack of knowledge of the postpositive function of the particle δὲ, is a sufficiently significant element to demonstrate, together with other similarities detailed above, the dependence of our manuscript on the Lyon edition.

<sup>50</sup> The neuter form, τριοβόλον exists, albeit very rare, and is a form of the more frequent τριώβολον. However, the form copied in the manuscript cannot correspond to a neuter noun. To complicate matters, Quiñones and Rojas (1983: 239) correct the erroneous form of the manuscript with another non-existent form (τριοβόλοι). As Stefanos Apostolou suggested in an oral communication, the form τριοβόλοι resembles closely forms of the word in modern Greek, which is interesting because it could reveal a certain interaction between Ancient, Byzantine Greek, and demotic idioms that would be reflected in this particular reading preserved in the Lyon edition.

<sup>51</sup> Rojas and Quiñones, 1983: 252.

As its fire mark indicates, this printed volume of the Lyon edition (1546) was part of the second group of works that comprised the Convent of Santo Domingo library at Oaxaca. Hence, it was already part of the convent's collection, possibly as early as the seventeenth century.

It is difficult to determine whether Ms 1594 is an autograph manuscript. The numerous orthographical errors in Greek, both in the original epigrams and in the collection of poems translated into Latin, indicate that the scribe had inadequate knowledge of Greek. Nevertheless, the regularity and consistency with which the ligatures are used suggest that the scribe had good experience in copying Greek texts.

Osorio states with certainty that several copies of the epigrams of Villerías were in circulation in the eighteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Osorio concludes that, although the errors in the Greek do not suffice to deny the attribution of the manuscript to Villerías (on the grounds that scribes tended to make corrections to the text as they wrote or after later revisions), they do seem to suggest that the manuscript is a copy of Villerías' original. Any suggestions to settle this question will remain hypothetical, but I believe there is reason to suggest that the manuscript could be autographed.<sup>53</sup>

Pending further palaeographic analysis, errors in Greek (accents, letters, punctuation, and others) provide insight into the modes of learning, appropriation, and reproduction of this language in eighteenth-century Mexico. They do not imply total ignorance of the language but rather a hasty hand and a lack of care when copying texts. I hypothesise that Villerías carelessly copied Greek texts in a manuscript he used for notes and drafts when he was learning the language, and he had the unique opportunity to hold the books of the Colegio de San Juan library in his hands. Later, when he was preparing Ms 1594, he returned to his earlier notes, selected the texts to include in his new manuscript, and reproduced them as he saw them therein. All this in the hope that, when his manuscript reached the press, he would have the opportunity to improve the text and purge those errors.

An epigram composed of two Greek elegiac couplets that appear in the book printed in 1725 (Joseph Bernardo de Hogal) *Llanto de las estrellas al ocaso de sol anochecido en el oriente*, after the Latin elegy in honour of Louis I, shed light on the authorship. It was not printed with movable types but by etching (i.e., text etched on a metal plate). The same epigram appears in Ms 1594 (fol. 86v) with some differences, yet it seems that both have been written by the same hand. Villerías, who had published a book with that publisher, must have known that de Hogal, at some point after 1725, came to possess Greek types.<sup>54</sup> I suggest that Villerías intended this manuscript to be published by this printer and hoped to participate actively in the process. It is difficult to establish a reliable hypothesis about Villerías's specific relationship with the edition of Poliziano published in Lyon in 1546 and held at the library of the convent of Santo Domingo of Oaxaca. Did the book pass through Puebla or Mexico city? Did Villerías consult it at the time of writing Ms 1594? At any rate, the philological arguments are solid in this regard, in particular, the reading κλέως in the margin of verse 9.

<sup>52</sup> Osorio Romero, 1991: 71-72 adduces a codex of José Antonio Bermúdez (see note 83) purportedly containing a Greek epigram of Villerías. To date, I have not been able to find this codex.

<sup>53</sup> When this article was about to be published, it came to my attention that in the Central Library of the National Autonomous University of Mexico there is a copy of an epistolary of Erasmus of Rotterdam published in Freiburg of Brisgovia in 1532 (Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami, *Epistolae Palaeonaei*). In its margins, the copy contains Latin translations of the Greek terms of the epistolary signed with the name of Joseph Villerías y Roelas (accessit versio marginalis Graecarum vocum per Joseph Villeriam Roelaeum). The handwriting is clearly the same as that of the manuscript examined here, which is proof that it is an autograph manuscript. I am grateful to Pedro Emilio Rivera Díaz for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>54</sup> Sarabia Viejo, 2008: 457, and this text note 10. In the *Aprilis dialogus* authored by the Jesuit Vicente López (published in the *Anteloquia* of Eguira y Eguren's *Bibliotheca Mexicana* in 1755), a debate between a Belgian, an Italian, and a Spaniard over the quality of American intellectual endeavours, the Belgian character alludes to the lack of Greek types in New Spain and the novelty they represented for book printing in the eighteenth century, promoted by Eguira y Eguren.



## Villerías' Latin Translation: An Early Component of the History of Translation of Classical Languages in Mexico

Right after the Greek text, a Latin translation in elegiac couplets immediately catches the eye, because it is not a literal translation but a creative rendition of the epigram. Unlike Greek, which Villerías knew imperfectly and whose use in the manuscript displays notable errors, his mastery of Latin is palpable. It is precisely in his translations that Villerías' originality as a Neo-Latin poet becomes apparent. The comparison between Villerías' translation and Toussain's Latin rendition for the 1519 Paris Ascension edition exposes fundamental differences: Toussain's is a literal translation in prose, whereas Villerías' is a liberal translation in verse.

One wonders why Villerías chose to translate the epigrams into Latin instead of Spanish. Why did he opt to provide a translation of a text in an elitist language only few would understand into another, similarly elitist language?<sup>55</sup> The answer to this must lie in the models Villerías felt he inherited in assembling this collection and the poetic projects he emulated. Alessandra Scala's epigram and the collection from which it comes, Poliziano's vulgate, offer a very clear answer: Villerías wanted to emulate the Hellenising muse of the Italian Quattrocento, which is why the longest poem in his anthology was taken from that collection. Villerías himself explains, not without irony and sarcasm, the reason for his Latinising efforts. The section of the manuscript that contains his original Latin epigrams opens with the following poem (fol. 72r):<sup>56</sup>

Mexiceas Latium cur quaeram natus ab undas  
noxia limosus fert ubi stagna lacus.  
Barbarus insuetam cur tentem visere Romam,  
quaerere sollicitus, lector amice,<sup>57</sup> potes.  
Scilicet ut mendum quod te repraehendere<sup>58</sup> posses  
erranti excuset lingua aliena mihi.

Why, born in the Mexican waves,  
where the silty lake drags the noxious stagnant waters,  
did I seek Latium? You may ponder, dear reader,  
over the reasons a barbarian solicitously strives to frequent strange Rome.  
So that you may excuse me when I err  
since I write in a strange tongue.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Osorio Romero (1991: 79) asks the same question.

<sup>56</sup> Osorio Romero, 1991: 89.

<sup>57</sup> This interpellation to the reader is reminiscent of Martial's epigram (5.16.1-2): *Seria cum possim, quod delectantia malo/ Scribere, tu causa es, lector amice, mihi* and Ovid's *Tristes* (3.1.2): *Da placidam fesso, lector amice, manum*.

<sup>58</sup> I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers, who insightfully suggested that in this verse the spelling of the verb *repraehendere* borders on a metrical flaw, which is possibly a deliberate *mendum*, as the verse states.

<sup>59</sup> Author's translation. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper for drawing my attention to the fact that these verses also echo the prologue of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (in particular the *exotici ac forensis sermonis rudis*, 1.1.5), as does Cato's disapproval, reported by Gellius (11.8) of the Greek used in the Annals of Albus Albinus. On the reading of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* in Latin in New Spain and particularly of its prologue, Laird, 2021 and García Ehrenfeld (forthcoming).

Villerías focuses not on his prominence as a Latinist but on his possible shortcomings. These verses clearly exhibit the modesty (as is common in many Latin poets) that tends to be rather a statement of exclusivity, through which it is affirmed that only a few will be able to perceive the richness of his poetry.

Hereunder, I present the Latin text followed by some notes on *loci similes* and intertexts and a selective analysis of how Villerías translates Greek. The primary purpose is to draw attention to a significant and little-known historical fact among contemporary Mexican students of classical literature about the history of translation of classical languages in Mexico. A tendency to defend faithful, literal translations at all costs remains prevalent among Mexican translators of Greek and Latin. The roots of this approach go back to Rubén Bonifaz Nuño, who, in the introductory pages of his Spanish translations of Greek and Latin texts in the *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Mexicana* (BSGRM),<sup>60</sup> repeatedly makes this principle explicit.<sup>61</sup> Apart from the specific discussion of this issue, which exceeds the purpose of this paper, what is striking is that, over the course of three centuries, the politics of translation of classical texts in Mexico has been forcefully turned away from Villerías' model. The most important and renowned translation in colonial Mexico, Francisco Xavier Alegre's Latin translation of the *Iliad*, published in Bologna in 1776 and later in Rome in 1788, is a translation *ad sententiam*.<sup>62</sup> Villerías constitutes a completely forgotten chapter in the history of translation of classical languages in Mexico.

Pulchrius a magno nil est quam vate probari,  
At te laudari, gloria qualis erit?  
Multi trioboli quoniam paucique poëtae:  
Ecce adsum sed minime, quae tibi in umbra aderam.

Namque ait ad similem doctus vir quemque moveri,  
At quid Alexandrae sit tibi nunc simile?  
Nam velut Ister aquas ex occasu fundit in Austrum  
Atque ortum, refluens sic prope cuncta rigas.

5

<sup>60</sup> The first bilingual collection in Latin America with a history of nearly eighty years (since 1944).

<sup>61</sup> For example, in the introduction to his translation of Propertius' *Elegies* (1983), he says: 'I do not conceive, in order to translate a classic, any other way or any other objective than literalism; to achieve it, the version must not be from meaning to meaning, because with this system the original author is ultimately subjected to the goodwill of the subjective interpretation of his translator, but from word to word, which allows (...) a more truly objective and certain approach to the meaning of the original' (p. LXII). In his translation of the *Aeneid* (1972), he says: 'I have preferred to stick to the most complete literalism (...) instead of searching for the essence of the original by means of the system, always shoddy and ignoble, when it comes to translating a classical work, which involves paraphrastic dilution' (p. CLXIII). In his translation of Virgil's *Georgics* (1963): 'I have tried to slavishly stick to the original (...) I have not tried to invent anything; I have not tried to explain anything. I have only worked to place, in front of each Latin word, the mirror of a Spanish word' (p. XXXVII). The next generation of Mexican translators of classical languages continued to abide by this standard. Eminent examples are the translations of Bulmaro Reyes Coria (almost all of Cicero), or those of Pedro Tapia Zúñiga: the *Odyssey*; Callimachos' *Hymns and Epigrams*; Aratos' *Phenomena*; and the fragments of Gorgias, in whose prologue the translator notes (1980: VIII): 'It was sought in synthesis that the translation of the fragments be a faithful and exact reflection of the original.'

<sup>62</sup> In the preface (p. VIII, *editio romana*), Alegre explains that he tried to express not the words but the spirit of the prince of poets (*Poetarum igitur Principis mentem, non verba, latinis versibus exprimere conati*). A few pages earlier (p. V) he warns that some consider *verbum a verbo* versions preferable to more liberal translations. He offers as an example Henri Estienne's criticism of free translations in his analysis of Poliziano's Latin translation of Herodian's *Histories*: their defect is that, in eagerly pursuing the elegance of the Latin language, they stray further from the Greek original, so that it cannot be easily distinguished what in the Latin version corresponds to the Greek text. Cf. García de Paso Carrasco and Rodríguez Herrera, 1998: 285-286; Osorio Romero, 1986: 89-90.

Vocibus et variis tua lingua discutit undas Graiiis, Romanis, Hebraicis, Lydiis. Naturam, numeros, medicinam, carmina, leges, Vindex Alcides, restituis Latio.	10
At meo virgineo ludunt epigrammata more Bocchyris ut dicat flos quasi, rosque fugax. Cur resonans elephanta petam sic dispari bombo? Aelurum, Pallas, tu quoque temnis item.	15

2 A te | 5 quenque | 7 occassu | 8 refluens mg. : undis a.r.

**1** *Pulchrius*: The position of this comparative adjective in the hexameter is not common in classical Latin poetry; it is used only by Propertius (2.3.34) and Statius (*Silv.* 1.1.35). In Christian poetry of late antiquity, it is used in Venantius Fortunatus and Dracontius. *probari*: The location of this passive infinitive as *clausula* of the verse is uncommon in classical poetry, but is employed twice by Lucretius (1.513, 2.499), once by Ovid (*Epist.* 17.127), a couple of times by Statius (*Silv.* 4.6.109 and 5.1.42) and in three passages of Martial. It is also sparingly used in late antiquity poetry (Ausonius, Claudian, and Corippus, among others). The iunctura *vate probari* is used in an epigram by the Croatian-Hungarian poet Janus Pannonius (1434-1472), included in his *Poemata*, a praise to the Italian humanist Niccolò Perotti (Book I. XXXII, v. 7, p. 572, edited in Utrecht in 1784, therefore unknown to Villerías). The intertext is interesting not because it could be an influence of Villerías, but rather because it coincides with his poetic phraseology.

**2** *At te laudari*: this phrase seems to lack a preposition suitable for an agent, like *abs. gloria qualis erit*: This phrase is non-existent in classical poetry but appears in the Neo-Latin poem *Geminae coronae carmeli carmina* by Fray Antonio di San Nicolò published in Naples in 1694, comprising elegiac couplets on the lives of Carmelite saints (carmen XVII.212: *Aetheris Arctoi, gloria qualis erit?*). Villerías' interest in the order of the Discalced Carmelites is demonstrated by his rendition in royal octaves published in 1728 (see above) of Fray Gabriel Cerrada's devotional *Escudo triunfante del carmelo*.

**3** The Greek verse is a straightforward recreation of *Anth. Graec. App.* 4.19, with the minor variation of εἶον instead of ἄνδρες. This verse is quoted in all the paroemiographers. The αἴτιον of the verse is that Apollo uttered it after Zeus entrusted him with the management of the oracles disavowing the psephomancy invented by Athena.<sup>63</sup> In a section dedicated to the Latin translation of the proverbs compiled by Zenodotus of his *Opera multifarii argumenti*, published in 1562 in Basel, Gilbert Cousin (1506-1572), the French humanist and private secretary of Erasmus, translated this verse as *Multi trioboli, pauci vates*.

**4** This line has no identifiable intertexts in classical poetry. The verbal form *aderam* is never used in classical hexameter poetry as the *clausula* of a verse. The scansion of the pentameter is incorrect, although it seems that Villerías composed the verse thinking of a very violent synalepha (non-existent but phonologically understandable) between *adsum sed*. Another possibility is that if the manuscript is a copy of a previous one, the copyist has corrupted the text; possible readings that do not hinder the scansion could be *ecce adsum et* or *ecce adsum at* or *ecce adsum? Minime quae...* The iunctura *ecce adsum* seems typical of religious texts. Interestingly, Francisco Xavier Alegre, in his translation of the *Iliad* (10.210), uses this iunctura.

**5** *namque ait*: this iunctura is attested only in a passage of Ovid (*Fast.* 6, 21) and in Stat. *Achil.* 1.494, according to some manuscripts. *ad similem*: the phrase is not proper to classical Latin poetic diction and is attested only in a sentence of Publilius Syrus (*Sent. App.* 83) and in a verse of the fifth-century CE Gallic poet Paulinus Petricordis (*de vita Martini* 5.818). *doctus vir*: the couple is not attested in any Latin hexameter poet, while the infinitive *moveri* is very common as *clausula* of a verse.

**7** This hexameter is not well scanned, probably not because of a corruption of the original text since the prepositional syntagm *ex occasu* translates the Greek ἐκ ζόφου literally.<sup>64</sup>

**9** The Lucretian and Virgilian *clausula* (*de rerum natura* 4.341, *Georg.* 3.357) *discutit umbras* resounds in the end of the verse, while *tua lingua* occurs in 11 passages of Venantius Fortunatus.

<sup>63</sup> Pontani, 2022: 144.

<sup>64</sup> I am grateful to one of the reviewers for bringing this to my attention.

**12** *restituis Latio*: this closure is very relevant because, besides radically changing the meaning of the original, it is a phrase used by Poliziano himself in his famous elegy dedicated to the humanist and poet Bartolomeo della Fonte, editor of classical texts and translator, with whom he had first enjoyed a friendship before becoming bitter enemies (*Ad Bartholomaeum Fontium*, v.215-216: *Sic tu, quos rapuit nobis cariosa vetustas/Restituis Latio, Vespasiane, viros*).<sup>65</sup>

**13** In an epigram by the seventeenth-century Dutch Neo-Latin poet Gulielmus Hornius, there appears a hexameter similar to that of Villerías: *At mea, sub tenui, ludunt epigrammata, velo*.<sup>66</sup>

**15** *elephanta petam*: the phrase is found in an epigram by the Italian Renaissance poet Lancino Curzio: *ignotus licet ipse elephanta petam ore culex*.<sup>67</sup>

There is nothing more beautiful than to be approved by a great poet,  
however, where would be the glory in receiving praise from you?  
Trifles abound, but poets are scarce:  
Here I am present, but not quite, since for you I remain in the shadows.

And since a learned man says that one is drawn to one's like, 5  
to what you now, however, do you resemble Alessandra?  
For as the Istros sheds its waters, from sunset to Austre and Ortho,  
so you, ebbing near, irrigate all things.

And your tongue cleaves the waves with varied voices:  
Greek, Roman, Hebraic, and Lydian. 10  
Nature, numbers, medicine, poems, and laws  
you restore to Latium, avenging Alcides.

My epigrams, however, amuse in the manner of maidens,  
that Bocchiris would almost call them flower, fleeting dew.  
Why resounding thus with disparate humming, shall I try to beat the elephant?  
In the same way you too, Pallas, despise the cat.

From the very first verse, the lucid translation creates a well-crafted hexameter that incorporates the complex connotations of Greek to Latin flawlessly. Villerías changes the comparative adjective ἄμεινον at the end of v. 1 into *pulchrius*, places it at the beginning of v. 1 of the Latin translation and replaces the noun αἴτιον with the passive verb *probari*. It is interesting to note the complex semantics of the Greek word αἴτιον. Whereas in Scala's epigram it clearly means 'praise', in the Latin version it conveys the sense of 'approval', so that in the following verse, when the Greek uses the same noun, Villerías chooses another passive verb, *laudari*. The noun repetition is replaced by two infinitives, thus bestowing greater semantic and sonorous richness on the couplet. This clearly demonstrates the eloquence of Villerías' version, which keeps a very long distance from Toussain's literal version with its calque *laude* and *laudatio*. Villerías takes more liberty in translating the Greek ἔμφορον ἄνδρος, in the same verse, as *magno vate*. Again, Toussain's version calques the expression with *prudente viro*.

In v. 3, Villerías translates the Greek μάντιές by *poëtae*, unlike Toussain's *vates*, which Villerías had already used in verse 1. More creative freedom emerges in v. 4, although this time it results in a wrongly scanned pentameter. With verbs in the first person (*adsum* and *aderam*) rather than in

<sup>65</sup> Knox, 2019: 240-255.

<sup>66</sup> Hornius, 1717: 777 (*Epigrammatum Liber XXX*).

<sup>67</sup> Curzio, 1521: 144 (*Liber Vicessimus*).



the second, the verse prioritises the poet's voice over that of her addressee. Instead of reproducing the epanalepsis of the verb ('you found me but failed to find me': εὑρες καὶ οὐχ εὑρες = *invenisti... non invenisti* in Toussain's translation), which creates a connection with the first line of Poliziano's epigram XXX (εὑρηχ' εὑρηχ'), Villerías paraphrases the hemistich: 'I am here but barely present, only a shadow for you.' Interestingly, in Villerías' version, Alessandra's assertive rejection of Poliziano is softened and transformed into a female reproach to the male's lack of attention. This change of focus, manifested by the change of gender in the poetic voice, reveals a masculine reappropriation of the female voice, wherein the refusal is transformed into a radically different gesture: the complaint. In any case, it is significant that the poet scans the verse wrongly whenever the translation deviates the most from the original.

In v. 5, Villerías translates θεῖος ἀοιδός as *doctus vir* instead of Toussain's literal *divinus poëta*, and turns the active verb ἄγει of the Homeric quotation from the Greek to a passive infinitive (*moveri*). It seems as if the translator systematically wanted to depart from the literal possibilities, having in mind to create an original Latin poetic diction.

In vv. 7-8, Villerías uses ancient terms (*Ister* for the Danube, *Austro* for midday, and *orto* for the east) and ventures a more complex periphrasis than the original Greek. Instead of a single verb in the second person referring to the addressee of the poem, who is being compared to the Danube (χέεις), the Latin comprises a period with two verbs and a participle: *fundit* (referring to the Istro), *rigas*, and *refluens* (both referring to the addressee of the poem).<sup>68</sup> Notably, in verse 7 the hexameter does not scan but it stutters precisely when the translator tries to render the Greek literally: by translating the prepositional phrase ἐκ ζόφου into Latin as *ex occasu*, the hexameter rhythm is lost.

In v. 9, again, Villerías liberally effaces the word κλέος of the original (which in v. 2 he translated as *gloria*) and thus transforms the image of fame rushing through the air (κλέος ἤερ' ἐλαστρεῖ) by that of the tongue cleaving the waves of the sea (*lingua discutit undas*). The modification is interesting for two reasons: first, because the image in Greek is not entirely clear, thus the translator felt obliged to recast it;<sup>69</sup> second, because the metaphor of the poetic tongue crossing the waves successfully complements the earlier comparison between the poet and the Danube.

The couplet in vv. 11-12 shows the most significant variation between the text of the Aldine edition and that of the Lascaris manuscript, for the Aldine reads in verse 12 Ἀλκείδην καλέει σ', whereas the Vat. Graec. reads Ἡρακλῆν καλέουσ'.<sup>70</sup> The Latin text of Villerías, taken from the *vulgata*, omits the noun ἄστρο and the participle ἀντιμεθελκόμενα,<sup>71</sup> and modifies the succession of the nouns in the Greek text. He also felt at liberty to add an adjective to the noun (*vindex*: avenger) and replace the verb καλέει with the expression *restituis Latio* ('you have restored them to Latium'), possibly taken from Poliziano's Latin poetry (see above p. 177, note to verse 12).

In the hexameter of the penultimate couplet (vv. 13-14), the Latin text changes σπουδάσματα (studies or efforts) into *epigrammata*, and παίγνια (toys or games) to *ludunt* (to amuse). For the first

<sup>68</sup> Toussain's translation: *Nam tu qualia Danubius, ex occasu in meridiem / Et rursus in orientem, alta fluentia fundis.*

<sup>69</sup> According to Pontani (2002: 146), there are no parallels for the Greek expression, which cannot mean 'disperses the fog' or 'dispels the darkness', but rather 'travels through air'.

<sup>70</sup> Heracles' alternate name, Alcides, was a sobriquet Ficino used for Poliziano. It is an adjective derived from the noun ἀλκή (strength, prowess, courage) and means powerful, strong, and courageous. Ficino would have so dubbed him because of his mighty struggle against the monsters of medieval ignorance and barbarism (Pesenti 1925: 255, n. 1).

<sup>71</sup> Which can be translated either as 'each of them wanting you for itself' (Pesenti, 1922: 255) 'or pulling you from both sides' (Pontani, 2002: 143).

time in the epigram, the pentameter translates almost literally the Greek text of the Aldina, adding only the adjective *fugax*, which does not appear in the original.

Finally, in the last couplet again, the hexameter is modified the most, whereas the pentameter is kept very faithful to the original. Villerías converts a statement in Greek to a rhetorical question in Latin. He ingeniously adds the adjective *dispar* and the participle *resonans*, referring to the first person who recites the poem. It is fortunate the *hypallage* of this adjective that, instead of agreeing with *bombo*, is transferred to the subject of the sentence ('I, resonant').

Interestingly, these Latin verses do not preserve unequivocal intertextual connections with classical Latin poetry. Rather, it seems that Villerías composed his couplets *ex novo*, avoiding to adhere closely to any specific classical model. Essentially, Villerías distances himself from the imitative poetic style that characterises his original Latin compositions, such as his epic poem *Guadalupe*, which reuses classical Latin phrases, mostly of Virgil, and also of Lucretius, Ovid, and Lucan, among others.<sup>72</sup> The identifiable textual parallels seem to entail many Neo-Latin poems, in which one can find *iuncturae* and expressions that resonate in Villerías' verses (Janus Pannonius, Antonio de San Nicolà, Gilbert Cousin, Poliziano, Willem Horn, and Lancino Curzio). These parallels could be suggestive of Villerías' own readings. In any case, it is more interesting to think that, regardless of whether he read all these poems or not, the similarities in the phraseology of this New Spanish translation indicate an awareness of the vast conglomerate of Latin poetic expressions that had animated European poetic life from the Renaissance onwards.

## Remarks and Discussion

Villerías' bilingual anthology constitutes a crucial and largely neglected chapter in the still unwritten history of the translation of classical languages in Mexico. It is a fundamental precursor of the most important translation project from Greek into Latin in the eighteenth century, F. X. Alegre's translation of the *Iliad*. However, unlike the latter, whose strong dependence on Virgil's poetic diction led some scholars to label it *Virgil's Iliad*,<sup>73</sup> Villerías' Latin translations do not rely significantly on classical poetic diction, but rather are characterised by originality and independence from classical models.<sup>74</sup>

The institutionalisation of classical studies in Mexico through the creation of the Translators' Centre of Classical Languages in the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 1966, formed a new stage dominated by a literalist approach to translation.<sup>75</sup> That is, the very institutionalisation of the discipline was closely linked to translation work and the politics of literalism, which emerged as the result of a paradoxical alliance between a conservative desire for fidelity to a text that is deemed pure and unalterable and a scientific reaction against nineteenth-century translators of classical texts. The latter, curiously, tended to be conservative yet "liberal" when translating classical texts, as they

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<sup>72</sup> Whereas some of the classical Latin poetry intertexts were briefly noted by Osorio Romero in his edition of *Guadalupe*, the topic requires much more research and attention.

<sup>73</sup> Menéndez Pelayo, 1947: 87; on the Virgilianism of Alegre's translation, García de Paso Carrasco and Rodríguez Herrera (1998) is very useful.

<sup>74</sup> Judging from F. X. Alegre's translation of the *Iliad* and the translation models that would be predominant in the nineteenth century (see note 76 below), it can be assumed that, until the middle of the twentieth century, the predominant model adopted in New Spain for the translation of classical texts was that of liberal translations.

<sup>75</sup> Named Centro de Estudios Clásicos del Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas in 1974.

could thus afford to censor or adapt content deemed unsuitable to their taste or unbecoming to the public.<sup>76</sup>

Everything changed with Rubén Bonifaz Nuño, the founder of the Translators' Centre and a staunch defender of literalism. His work is a turning point in translation practices of classical languages in Mexico and deserves detailed discussion. For the purpose of this paper, it suffices to note that his influence has dominated the discipline from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, that is, in all the years that classical studies have been under the auspices of state and public institutions. How can this shift in translation policies be explained? What needs does it respond to, and how does it fit into the Mexican classical tradition?

It would seem as if literalism were the necessary redoubt to guarantee the scientific accuracy of the translation work and, even more so, the translator's knowledge of the source language, contrary to the earlier tradition of liberal and paraphrastic translations.<sup>77</sup> Twentieth-century translators challenged these traditional approaches, termed creative translations of the past 'parodies and ridiculous imitations', and called for 'real translations with philological precepts'.<sup>78</sup>

Alfonso Reyes unfinished translation of the *Iliad*, published with the title *Aquiles Agraviado* (Infuriated Achilles),<sup>79</sup> is diametrically opposed to these forms of literalism in twentieth-century Mexico and has received strong criticism from certain academic circles.<sup>80</sup> Reyes' declaration in his introduction stirred controversy: 'I do not read the language of Homer, I barely decipher it', further elaborated a few pages after: 'I do not offer a word-for-word translation, but from concept to concept, adjusting myself to the original document and preserving the literal expressions that must be preserved, either for their historical value or for their aesthetic value (...) *Whoever wants the philologist's translation knows where to look for it*'.<sup>81</sup> Reyes' translation is a worthy successor to the long Mexican tradition of translators *ad sententiam* that started with Villerías (the first important representative in the field of Greek) and was followed by Alegre and others in the nineteenth century.

<sup>76</sup> Nineteenth-century Mexican translations of classical texts is a subject that requires a separate study. The most important translator of Greek is possibly Ignacio Montes de Oca (1840-1921), translator of Pindar, the bucolic poets, and Apollonios of Rhodes. Bishop of Tamaulipas and San Luis Potosí, therefore a member of the conservative clergy, and member of the *Roman Arcadia* under the pseudonym Ipandro Acaico, Montes de Oca received extensive training as a Hellenist at Oxford. In the prologue to his translation of Pindar, he confidently declares his work as 'the first Spanish metrical translation of the prince of lyricists'. On nineteenth-century translations of classical authors in Mexico, Quiñones (2018), who also discusses José Joaquín Pesado (the translator of Synesius of Cyrene) and José Sebastián Segura (who translated the fragments of Callinos and Tyrtaos).

<sup>77</sup> Clearly articulated in R. Bonifaz Nuño's introduction to his translation of the *Aeneid*: 'Apart from other defects, *I think that paraphrastic translation has the defect of making the translator's knowledge of the original language doubtful*, since such a type of translation often gives the impression of not being the result of direct work on the text, but the fruit of the reading of other translations' (Bonifaz Nuño, 1972: CLXIII).

<sup>78</sup> Quiñones, 2018: 401.

<sup>79</sup> Reyes, 1951.

<sup>80</sup> E.g., Alatorre, 1974: 22 (quoted in Guichard, 2004): 'Don Alfonso sabía el griego como yo el ruso: leía las letras y entendía ciertas palabras aisladas, pero hasta allí ...' (Don Alfonso knew Greek as I know Russian: He could read the letters and understand certain isolated words, but that's it ...). On Reyes' translation, Guichard, 2004, esp. 428-435 on the polemic and critics.

<sup>81</sup> Reyes, 1951: 91. Interestingly, Bonifaz Nuño himself reviewed this translation (1952: 3), praised it and declared it better than the one of the Spanish Hellenist José Mamerto Gómez Hermosilla, first published in 1831. Bonifaz states in the first paragraph: 'The judgment given on a translation must necessarily be incomplete when the language in which the translated work was originally written is unknown. In such a situation I find myself... It would take Bonifaz thirty-eight years to learn Greek and publish his first translation into Spanish (Bonifaz Nuño: 1990).

This New Spain anthology of Greek poems invites us to think about the methodological principles operative for the study of the reception of classical texts in the Viceroyalty, which, for lack of a better name, I will provisionally term 'the philology of dispossession and plundering'. Except for this manuscript, all other Greek works produced in New Spain that we know of have since disappeared without a trace. Among these, the most prominent were the Greek grammars of Francisco Galves y Escalona and Don Cayetano de Cabrera y Quintero<sup>82</sup> and the history of Hellenism in New Spain written by the Jesuit Agustín De Castro, who also translated Anacreon, Sappho, and Hesiod into Spanish and compared a tragedy of Seneca with another of Euripides, according to J. L. Maneiro.<sup>83</sup> Even manuscripts referenced by twentieth-century scholars like Méndez Plancarte and Ignacio Osorio are difficult to find: for example, José Antonio Bermúdez' manuscript entitled *Epistulae eruditae* discussed by Méndez Plancarte, which contained a section of Greek epigrams, according to Osorio Romero.<sup>84</sup> This unfortunate situation complicates the elaboration of a solid frame of reference upon which studies of Mexican Hellenism can be based: almost everything we know about the Mexican Hellenising muse seems to have dissipated.

Unlike in Europe, where research on an author's sources can be undertaken with relative transparency, since the catalogues of printed works and manuscripts allow an accurate reconstruction of an author's readings (and even, as in the case of many humanists, to read their own autographs, *glosses*, and *scholia*), in New Spain the situation is dire. Many of the books to which a poet like Villerías could have had access were stolen, looted, exported to other countries, or expropriated by private owners, uncatalogued and often kept out of the public's eye and the researchers' reach.<sup>85</sup> Although old catalogues and fire marks give us a fair idea of which books were circulating in colonial Mexico, they cannot provide sufficient information to safely determine the sources, readings, and material available to eighteenth-century New Spanish poets. Often, researchers underestimate the vast volume of works available to Novohispanic authors, due to the lack of concrete evidence of book availability and arrivals in New Spain.<sup>86</sup> Villerías' collection of

<sup>82</sup> Beristáin (vol. I, 1816 [1980]: 232) states that he wrote a *Liber variorum epigrammatum e Graeco in Latinum translatorum*, which is now lost (see note 2).

<sup>83</sup> *De vitis aliquot mexicanorum*, Bologna, 1792, t. III, p. 195; Osorio Romero, 1986: 85.

<sup>84</sup> Méndez Plancarte, 1970: 95-112; Osorio Romero, 1991: 71. Mercedarian father José Antonio Bermúdez compiled his Latin correspondence with José Antonio Flores, the canon of Guadalajara's cathedral, together with other materials written in Latin, gathered between 1731 and 1761, in a codex entitled *Epistulae eruditae*. A section entitled *Versiuncularum farrago*, according to Méndez Plancarte, included compositions in Greek (versions of some Latin liturgical hymns, as well as epigrams of his own and other authors). To date I have not been able to find this manuscript to corroborate this information or study the contents in Greek (see note 52).

<sup>85</sup> The looting continues today. In May 2021, the governor of the state of Puebla protested: 'What did they do in the Palafoxiana Library? They mutilated books, they mutilated works, maps, they took them away. It can't stay like that.' In August of the same year the secretary of culture of the same state, after conducting an audit, announced that: 'In the Palafoxiana we found 120 missing volumes and some others lying in a room. We are going to cross-reference them and there will be a leaf-by-leaf review to detect missing books.' If in 2021 Mexico the integrity of archives cannot be guaranteed, one fears to envisage conditions in colonial times.

<sup>86</sup> Although a dramatisation aimed at praising the intellectual environment of New Spain and defending it against the attacks of the classical scholar Manuel Martí (see below), the *Aprilis Dialogus* of the Jesuit Vicente López (see note 54 above) reiterates the vast quantity of books that existed in New Spain. At the beginning of the dialogue, the narrator says that the ships that sail from Spain to the port of Veracruz usually carry rare and strange merchandise of books (*raras ac peregrinas librorum merces*), so one may ponder whether the American gold and silver had enriched Europe more than the Europe had enriched the Mexicans with their books (*et dubitari possit auro ne magis, et argento americani ad Aeuropam, an Aeuropa suis libris mexicanos ditaverit*).



Greek epigrams, and particularly his Latin translation of Alessandra Scala's epigram to Poliziano, encourage reflection on the methodological particularities that must be considered for the study of classical reception in colonial and peripheral contexts.

The inclusion of Scala's epigram in Villerías anthology is the strongest and most sophisticated evidence of Poliziano's reception in New Spain. To date, there was no evidence that Poliziano's epigrammatic poetry in Greek had reached or been read in New Spain. An analysis of the four editions of Poliziano currently preserved in the Palafoxiana Library at Puebla (the Aldina of 1498, the two Lyon editions published by S. Gryphius in 1528 and 1550, and the Basel edition of 1553 printed by N. Episcopius) and of the 1546 Lyon edition preserved in the Francisco de Burgoa Library at Oaxaca, all of which were present in New Spain very possibly at least since the seventeenth century, shows that Villerías copied Scala's epigram from the Lyon edition of 1546. The punctuation, accentuation, certain orthographic errors, and the reading of a pair of *voces nihili* point in that direction. The reasons why Villerías might have consulted this volume, in particular, are not clear, and some hypotheses can be made regarding his connection and relation with the library of the convent of Santo Domingo in Oaxaca. Nevertheless, based solely on philological arguments derived from the manuscript itself, it is safe to argue that Villerías copied his text from that edition, at least when he copied this manuscript. The specific history of this volume and its vicissitudes may be the subject of a particular study, but for the moment it can be safely said that correspondences between Villerías' manuscript and this volume are evident.

Nonetheless, it is quite possible to trace the main library in which Villerías was able to find the sources for his anthology of Greek poems. Almost all books bear the fire mark of the Colegio de San Juan, one of the three colleges belonging to the Royal and Pontifical Tridentine Seminary of Puebla. It is quite possible that since his years of studying Latin with the Jesuits, Villerías had found various Greek books along the way and developed a particular interest in this language. He should have had access to the Colegio de San Juan library, where he may have read and self-studied classical languages. Not only the aforementioned copies of Poliziano, but also the following editions were kept in the library of the Colegio: the 1562 edition of the Digest (Paris, Merlin-Desboys), from which Villerías possibly took the text of epigram VI of his anthology; the 1619 edition of Lucian's works, from which Villerías may have taken the text of epigram I of his collection;<sup>87</sup> and the 1604 edition of Demosthenes and Aeschines published in Frankfurt (Claudium Marnium et Haeredes), from which he may have taken epigram XXI.

In order to understand the importance and scope that a Hellenising enterprise, such as that of Villerías, had had in eighteenth-century New Spain, it is helpful to contextualise this Greek anthology from New Spain within a broader movement of vindication of classicism taking place in the margins of the Spanish empire and the Mexican periphery.<sup>88</sup> In the eighteenth century, the failings of Spanish classicism became a topic of fervent debate among certain intellectual circles. Some Spaniards, such as Manuel Martí (1663-1737), 'one of the most eminent classical scholars

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<sup>87</sup> Berruecos Frank, 2022: n. 27; also, here n. 19.

<sup>88</sup> On the situation of the knowledge of Greek in Spain and Portugal, Pontani, 2022: 559-564. On Hellenism in Mexico, the most detailed study hitherto is Osorio Romero (1986), which covers the history of Greek language in Mexico from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century. On the importance of Martín del Castillo's Greek grammar (written in New Spain and published in 1678) for the learning of Greek in colonial Mexico and, above all, for the Hellenic education of Villerías, Berruecos Frank, 2022: 292 with notes 63 and 76 therein, where the interactions between the *exempla* of that grammar and the Greek forms used by Villerías are highlighted.

of his age',<sup>89</sup> openly denounced the lack of rigour of Spanish classicism. In his *Epistle to the Spanish youth* (*Hispanae juventuti*), possibly written around 1723,<sup>90</sup> after emphasising the importance of Greek in various European countries, Martí states forcefully that Greek language and culture 'not long after, flew swiftly to our Spain; but they flew so swiftly that they did not stop for long' (*Nec multo post in Hispaniam nostrum pervolarunt: sed pervolarunt tantum, nec diu consistere*).<sup>91</sup> Another of Martí's letters caused great controversy in the *criollos'* circles of New Spain. The epistle was addressed to a Spanish youth, Antonio Carrillo, eager to try his luck in America.<sup>92</sup> The reading of this letter in New Spain and the reactions it sparked were crucial to the formation of the *criollos'* identity.<sup>93</sup> In a particularly virulent passage,<sup>94</sup> Martí slurs the cultural environment of New Spain as 'such a vast desert of culture' (*tam vasta literarum solitudine*) and asks his addressee 'in which libraries are you going to study?' (*ecquas lustrabis bibliothecas?*). Martí warns him that if he undertakes such a journey, he 'will try to achieve this in vain like someone who shears a donkey or milks a male goat' (*Haec enim omnia tam frustra quaeres, quam qui tondet asinum, vel mulget hircum*).

Although the debate on the poverty of colonial and Spanish classicism had intensified with the publication of this *Epistula*, to which Eguiera y Eguren's *Bibliotheca Mexicana* was a response,<sup>95</sup> it is safe to assume that the intellectual circles of colonial Mexico were aware of the proverbial backwardness of classical studies in the metropolis.<sup>96</sup> In this sense, the audacity of writing in Greek can be interpreted as an affirmation of the superiority and good standing that Greek literature enjoyed in the Viceroyalty.<sup>97</sup> Obviously, the flourishing of the Greek language remained a *desideratum*, due to the lack of interest and means to help this cause transcend beyond the limits of a manuscript that would finally end up being forgotten and buried on the shelves of the National Library until 1983. However, it is highly significant to acknowledge the anthologies of Greek poetry and active composition in this language as indicative of the intention of eighteenth-century Mexican Hellenists, like Villerías, to revitalise the Hellenising muse purposefully and declare to the world that Mexican Greek was in better health than Greek in the metropolis, where knowledge and competence in Greek drastically declined between 1500 and 1800, and where, accordingly, Greek composition

<sup>89</sup> Laird, 2018: 15. On Manuel Martí's prowess as a classical philologist and as a composer of Latin poetry, Laird, 2012: 247.

<sup>90</sup> However, the work is dated to 1705 and published until 1734 in the prologue to his edition of the Latin poetry of Fernando Ruiz de Villegas, a sixteenth century Spanish disciple of Luis Vives; cf. Comes-Peña, 2015a: 101.

<sup>91</sup> Osorio Romero, 1986: 65.

<sup>92</sup> It was published in Madrid in 1735 (*Epistolarum libri duodecim*).

<sup>93</sup> Comes-Peña, 2015b: p. 150.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Laird, 2012: 244.

<sup>95</sup> Laird (2012: 249-251) argues persuasively that Eguiera y Eguren's *Bibliotheca Mexicana* (1755) was deeply inspired by the ambitious project of Nicolás Antonio's *Bibliothecae Hispanae Veteris et Novae*, an undertaking to which Manuel Martí was invited to complete and edit and to which he contributed in a very important way. An interesting fact emphasised by Laird (2012: 248) is that Ms 1600 (National Library of Mexico), one of the most important documents of the Neo-Latin poetry of the New Spanish Jesuit Enlightenment, contains a copy of Martí's *Oratio per crepitum ventris*, most probably copied after this intense polemic and without further details about the identity of Manuel Martí.

<sup>96</sup> Manuel Martí's work abounds in criticism of the debasement of Spanish classicism. A telling example of the disinterest and perceived uselessness of Greek is one of the erudite letters of Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, in which he labels the knowledge of Greek as pointless. In his time, he says, there were five or six Spaniards who have dedicated themselves to the study of this language (quoted in Comes Peña, 2015a: 85-86).

<sup>97</sup> Incidentally, this need to affirm Mexican classicism over Spanish classicism remains current among Mexican classicists, many of whom view Spanish classical philology with contempt and show great respect for classical philology in other European countries, particularly Germany and Italy.

rarely made it to the printing press.<sup>98</sup> As far as I know, no analogous undertakings are recorded in the Iberian Peninsula during the eighteenth century. Books on Greek grammar shared a similar fate. One of the most important Spanish handbooks of Greek grammar was written in New Spain in 1678, not in the metropolis.<sup>99</sup> Arguably, intellectual circles in the Viceroyalty wished to demonstrate the advances of Hellenic classicism and make available didactic and informative materials to those interested.

## Conclusions

The manuscript anthology containing Alessandra Scala's epigram is the only known collection of Greek poems compiled in colonial-period Mexico. The selection of texts reveals clear independence from the *Greek Anthology* (only eight out of twenty-two poems feature in the *Planudea*). An analysis of the poems allows insight into the Greek texts to which Villerías had access. This reconstructed list comprises a representative sample of Greek literature, from the Archaic period to the Renaissance. An overview of this list suggests that Villerías drew most of his Greek texts from volumes the Jesuits kept in Puebla, particularly in the Colegio de San Juan, which was later confiscated by Francisco Fabián y Fuero, bishop of Puebla, and became part of the Biblioteca Palafoxiana. In particular, the joint inclusion of Alessandra Scala's epigram and the hexastich epigram at the beginning of the 1562 edition of the Digest published in Paris (Merlin-Desboys) invests his collection with particularly Polizianic connotations.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike, for example, Alegre's translation of the *Iliad*, whose dependence on Virgil is evident, or Villerías' original Latin poetry, full of intertexts (particularly of Virgil, but also of Lucan, Ovid, and Lucretius, among others), the almost complete lack of such intertexts in Villerías' translation of Alessandra Scala's epigram reveals independence from classical poetic models. It is impossible to tell whether certain echoes of Neo-Latin poems are intertexts or coincidences in the poetic diction. Villerías' unique Latin style and his originality as a Latin poet manifest more clearly in his translations, not in his original poems. That is because his Latin composition *ex novo* is always constrained by the long tradition that precedes it; the need to keep close to the great predecessors reduces the margin for originality. Additionally, since the margin of unpredictability is greater in free literary creation than in the work of translation, the poetics that guide the stylistic choices becomes much more explicit in the latter.

Four hundred and seventy-four years separate the first attestation of Greek letters in New Spain, the 1539 translation of the epistles of St. Paul and other Church Fathers by Cristobal de Cabrera,<sup>101</sup> from Pedro Tapia Zúñiga's 2013 translation of the *Odyssey*. In this long history of Mexican translations of

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<sup>98</sup> Of the nineteen poems written by the sixteen Iberian poets included in Pontani's anthology (2022), ten remained in manuscript only; of the remaining nine that were printed, only four were printed in Spain (in Valencia, Salamanca, and Madrid), while one was printed in Basel, two in Italy (Mantua and Brescia), and two more in Lisbon. An interesting parallel is the Spanish poet Antonio Martínez de Quezada (1718-1751), author of a manuscript preserved at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid (Ms 191) containing an important commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony* followed by a hymn to the Virgin Mary in 147 hexameters with a Latin translation of his own (Pontani, 2022: 587-591). Villerías' Greek epigram to the Virgin of Guadalupe (Berruecos Frank, 2022), possibly preceding de Quezada's by twenty years, constitutes an important point of contact between the two. Like Villerías, de Quezada was a marginal character who died in poverty and at the same age (33 years old). For more information, Gil, 1974.

<sup>99</sup> Berruecos Frank, 2022.

<sup>100</sup> See notes 20 and 36 above.

<sup>101</sup> Osorio Romero, 1986: 69.

classical languages, the work of Villerías is not only the first attempt in the field of Greek poetry but also the first model of liberal poetic translation *ad sententiam*. It aimed to express the original author's *mens*, instead of mirroring the source text in the targeted language.<sup>102</sup> F. X. Alegre also choose to compose a liberal translation of the *Iliad* a few decades later and Alfonso Reyes returned to it in the twentieth century. Intriguingly, by translating liberally, the utmost connoisseur of the Greek language in early eighteenth-century Mexico thought he would be validated much more than if he had ventured into a cold, staunchly literal translation. Unfortunately, this relationship between literalism and academic validation was completely reversed in the twentieth century and the reasons for this demand more research. Villerías' creative and liberal Latin translations invite us to problematise and question the limits of literalism and the processes by which this policy of translation constituted the touchstone for the institutionalisation of Mexican classical studies by establishing itself as a means of validating the translator and imprinting a seal, a certificate of knowledge of classical languages.

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<sup>102</sup> This debate between *verbum pro verbo* translations and *ad sententiam* ones captured the interest of F. X. Alegre, as he notes in the Foreword to his translation of the *Iliad*.



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## Abstract (Spanish) | Resumen

El Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional de México conserva un manuscrito en su mayoría inédito (Ms 1594) que contiene las obras en latín y griego de un poeta novohispano llamado José de Villerías y Roelas (1695-1728). Se trata, sin duda, del documento más importante que conocemos escrito en griego y producido en la Nueva España durante el periodo colonial. Hasta la fecha, no se han localizado ni estudiado otros materiales novohispanos con composiciones originales en griego; tampoco conocemos ninguna colección de poemas griegos antologados por un helenista de la Nueva España, por lo que el manuscrito constituye una especie de *codex unicus* del helenismo novohispano. En este trabajo, presento una edición de uno de los poemas, el más largo de la colección de poesía griega de Villerías, y de su traducción al latín. El epigrama en cuestión se atribuye a una destacada humanista del *Quattrocento* italiano, Alessandra Scala, que presuntamente lo compuso en respuesta a uno de los poemas que le dedicó el famoso poeta Angelo Poliziano. Antes de presentar y analizar el texto de Villerías y su traducción, el artículo rastrea la recepción de Poliziano en la Nueva España y explora el posible contacto que Villerías pudo tener con su *Liber Epigrammatum Graecorum*. Por último, se ofrece una discusión panorámica sobre los diversos enfoques que la traducción de textos griegos fue adoptando en México desde el periodo colonial hasta la actualidad, con el objetivo de estimular los debates acerca de la recepción clásica en contextos poscoloniales y periféricos y de comprender las políticas en que el clasicismo logró institucionalizarse en el México contemporáneo.

### La versión novohispana del epigrama renacentista de A. Scala y su traducción al latín

La transmisión textual del epigrama es doble. Por un lado, se conserva en la edición Aldina de las obras completas de Poliziano publicada en 1498 (y en las sucesivas ediciones dependientes de ella). Por otra parte, se incluye sin indicación de autoría ni destinatario, en un manuscrito autógrafo de Janus Laskaris (el *Vaticanus Graecus* 1412, fol. 62), lo que hace suponer o bien que el poema es del propio Laskaris o bien que ayudó a Alessandra en su composición. La edición del texto del epigrama se presenta aquí con pequeñas correcciones ortográficas, seguida de un aparato crítico en el que se registran algunas correcciones del texto apoyadas en las lecturas de la Aldina, las otras ediciones de Poliziano que llegaron a la Nueva España y el texto del manuscrito de Laskaris (*Vat. Graec.*). Registré el texto tal y como está en el manuscrito limitándome a pequeñas correcciones que el lector podrá corroborar en el aparato (principalmente colocación de acentos y espíritus). Esto implica que algunas lecturas del texto no son correctas, pero es importante registrarlas de esta manera para dar cuenta de la forma en que el griego era escrito por este autor en el México de principios del siglo XVIII.

De sus propias composiciones griegas, de las que conservamos sólo 30 versos, se puede decir, por un lado, que Villerías comete con frecuencia errores ortográficos y que a veces muestra desconocimiento del género de los sustantivos, pero que, por el contrario, posee conocimientos de los dialectos griegos, tiene nociones aceptables de prosodia y, por último, posee conocimientos del uso de los modos verbales, aunque a veces su sintaxis no es del todo ejemplar y suena algo torpe y atropellada. La comparación entre la Aldina, la edición de Lyon de 1546 y la de Basilea de



1553 sugiere que Villerías reprodujo el texto de la edición de Lyon conservada en Oaxaca. Como indica su marca de fuego, este volumen impreso formó parte del segundo grupo de obras que conformaron la biblioteca del Convento de Santo Domingo, por lo que puede decirse que pertenecía a la colección del convento, posiblemente desde el siglo XVII. Es difícil establecer una hipótesis fiable sobre la relación concreta de Villerías con este ejemplar. En todo caso, los argumentos filológicos son sólidos al respecto, como el artículo intenta demostrar.

## Las políticas de traducción de las lenguas clásicas en México

La antología bilingüe de Villerías constituye un capítulo crucial y en gran medida olvidado de la historia aún no escrita de la traducción de las lenguas clásicas en México. Es un antecedente fundamental del proyecto de traducción del griego al latín más importante del siglo XVIII, la traducción de la *Iliada* de F. X. Alegre. Sin embargo, a diferencia de esta última, cuya fuerte dependencia de la dicción poética de Virgilio llevó a algunos estudiosos a calificarla como la *Iliada* de Virgilio, las traducciones al latín de Villerías no se apoyan significativamente en la dicción poética clásica, sino que se caracterizan por su originalidad e independencia de los modelos clásicos y por su tendencia a modificar y adaptar el texto de partida.

A partir de un análisis selectivo de cómo Villerías traduce el epigrama de Alessandra Scala del griego al latín, resulta evidente que el trabajo de traducción consiste en la capacidad de reinterpretar y adaptar creativamente los contenidos originales evitando constantemente el literalismo, incluso a riesgo de violentar el metro. Dentro de la historia contemporánea de la traducción de las lenguas clásicas en México, este modelo no literalista constituye un punto de contraste radical frente a las formas institucionales actuales de ejercer el clasicismo. A lo largo de tres siglos, la política de traducción de textos clásicos en México se ha alejado con fuerza del modelo de Villerías.

La institucionalización de los estudios clásicos en México, consolidada mediante la creación del Centro de Traductores de Lenguas Clásicas en la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México en 1966, configuró una nueva etapa dominada por un enfoque literalista de la traducción. La propia institucionalización de la disciplina estuvo estrechamente vinculada a la labor de traducción y a la política del literalismo, que surgió como resultado de una paradójica alianza entre un deseo conservador de fidelidad hacia un texto que se concibe puro e inalterable y una reacción cientifista contra los traductores decimonónicos de textos clásicos, que curiosamente solían ser conservadores aunque “liberales” en su labor de traducción, pues así se podían permitir censurar o adaptar los contenidos que consideraban inadecuados para su gusto o impropios para su público.

Todo cambió con Rubén Bonifaz Nuño, fundador del Centro de Traductores y firme defensor de la literalidad. Su trabajo es un punto de inflexión en las prácticas de traducción de las lenguas clásicas en México y su influencia ha dominado la disciplina a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo XX, es decir, en todos los años en que los estudios clásicos han estado bajo el auspicio de instituciones estatales y públicas. ¿Cómo se explica este cambio en las políticas de traducción? ¿A qué necesidades responde y cómo se inscribe en la tradición clásica mexicana?

La literalidad parece que ha venido a desempeñar la función de reducto para garantizar la exactitud científica del trabajo de traducción y, más aún, el conocimiento del traductor de la lengua de partida, a diferencia de la tradición anterior de traducciones liberales y parafrásticas. Los traductores de lenguas clásicas mexicanos del siglo XX se han validado institucionalmente mediante

un desafío a estos planteamientos tradicionales, que muchas veces ha consistido en descalificar las traducciones creativas del pasado como “parodias e imitaciones ridículas” y reclamar “verdaderas traducciones con preceptos filológicos”. El trabajo creativo y libre de traducción latina desarrollado por Villerías invita a problematizar y cuestionar los límites del literalismo y los procesos mediante los cuales esta política de traducción constituyó la piedra de toque para la institucionalización de los estudios clásicos mexicanos.