

## **Translation and the homosexual canon:**

### **Thomas Cannon's 1749 'Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd'**

**ABSTRACT:** This paper analyses the fragmentary apologia for pederasty by Thomas Cannon. Published in pamphlet form in 1749, it was suppressed and prosecuted, and lost to history until its recent recovery. The recovery of the text is only partial, as it was preserved in quoted excerpts in the wording of the indictment against it. Despite its fragmentary state, it is one of the earliest defences of same-sex love, and classical texts and examples naturally form a major part of its argument. Although Cannon's treatise is important for the history of sexuality and translation studies, it has received limited attention from classicists, despite containing multiple translations from classical authors, together with Cannon's editorial comments. This paper explores the contribution of the pamphlet to the history of sexuality, through a focus on Cannon's translations.

Scholars have long been aware of the fact of the 1749 publication in London of Thomas Cannon's 'Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd'<sup>1</sup> and of the subsequent prosecution of Cannon and the pamphlet's printer, John Purser. Cannon prudently fled the country before the case was tried; Purser was sentenced to be fined, imprisoned, and pilloried in 1751. The pamphlet itself was apparently lost to history save for a few tantalising references in external sources, until Hal Gladfelder, a scholar of eighteenth-century literature who was then working on the novelist John

Cleland, found the indictment of Purser amongst the records of the King's Bench. While imprisoned in November 1749 for his obscene 1748-9 *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* or *Fanny Hill*, which contains its own notorious 'sodomitical' episode (discussed below with reference to Cannon's text), Cleland seems to have been responsible for bringing Cannon's pamphlet to legal attention.<sup>2</sup> Cleland wrote from prison to the Duke of Newcastle's law clerk, adducing in defence of his own text the failure to prosecute Cannon, who was 'mad and wicked enough to Publish a Pamphlet evidently in defence of *Sodomy*, advertised in all the papers.'<sup>3</sup>

The indictment against Purser, which Gladfelder edited and published in 2007 (Gladfelder 2007a), quotes lengthy excerpts from Cannon's pamphlet, interspersed with comments on its nature, described as a 'Wicked Lewd Nasty Filthy Bawdy Impious and Obscene Libel'<sup>4</sup> tending towards the corruption of the youth of the kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Although much about Cannon's pamphlet and the circumstances of its original publication remains unclear, there is no doubting its significance to the history of sexuality: it is 'the first extended public defence'<sup>6</sup> of same-sex relations known to have been published in English.<sup>7</sup>

Cannon's text is also important for classical reception,<sup>8</sup> not least because it anticipates the use of antiquity in later, much better-known apologias for same-sex relations, such as those of Jeremy Bentham (c. 1785), Shelley (1818), and John Addington Symonds (1873/83 and 1891).<sup>9</sup> However, the only classicist to date to consider Cannon's text is Daniel Orrells, whose 2011 monograph, *Classical Culture and Modern Masculinity*, takes Cannon as the starting point for an exploration of the reception of ancient Greek pederastic pedagogy. Orrells' main interest is in what it means for the eighteenth-century man to look back to antiquity as exemplary,<sup>10</sup> and Orrells does not consider the topic that is the main focus of this paper: Cannon's

translations of classical texts. The pamphlet's most developed and complex engagements with antiquity occur in its editorial comments upon, and lengthy versions of, passages from Petronius, Lucian, and pseudo-Lucian's *Erotes*. These translations and Cannon's editorializing demonstrate a wide-ranging knowledge of classical literature and its modern reception. Both the translations themselves, and the way in which Cannon frames them and incorporates them into his argument, are creative, audacious, and highly tendentious. They, and Cannon's text more broadly, therefore repay close attention for what they reveal about his ideas on same-sex relations in antiquity and how the ancient world can be exemplary for the modern, topics of great importance to the history of sexuality, classical reception, and translation studies.

For those who are familiar with later apologias for same-sex relations, such as those cited above, Cannon's text is unexpected in several aspects: its defence of pederasty by reference to it as a widespread and well-regarded practice in antiquity, and one enjoyed by many of its great men, anticipates moves made in later defences, but we shall see that Cannon surprisingly also makes much of fleeting evidence from ancient texts that boy-beloveds (or *eromenoi*) also took pleasure in pederasty. In this, as we shall see, he anticipates modern scholarly focuses on such evidence, at the same time as outraging contemporary *mores*; the indictment makes claims about Cannon's corruption of youth, and encouraging young men to embrace the pleasures of being an *eromenos* may have been one of the aims of his apologia, although the fact that we have only excerpts of it, tendentiously chosen by the prosecutor, does not allow certainty in this or many other aspects of its interpretation. Cannon's defence also surprises when (translating ps-Lucian) it cites examples of same-sex desire among age equals – for example, Achilles and Patroclus (as discussed below); Cannon thereby

anticipates modern ideas about age equality in same-sex relations that have been embraced only more recently, by the contemporary gay rights movement.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the classical texts that Cannon cites – indeed, translates at length – are not at all those which we might expect to find in a defence of same-sex relations, although this may of course be attributable to the selective nature of the indictment, whose author possibly chose those excerpts that made Cannon seem most reprehensible. Lucian, Pseudo-Lucian, and Petronius were, however, as we shall see, much read and translated in the period in which Cannon wrote, although their depiction of same-sex relations was far more controversial than Cannon's praise of them may suggest. The analysis of Cannon's translations that follows therefore takes near contemporary translations and responses to these authors into account, as well as the translations themselves.

## **I. Translation as a boon**

Cannon's first engagement with the concept of translation is found within the indictment's opening extract, which seems likely to have come near the start of the original pamphlet:<sup>12</sup>

With wond'rous Boast curst Pederasts advance, that Boy-love was the top  
Refinement of most enlighten'd Ages; or, never in Supreme Degree prevail'd  
where liberal Knowledge had not fix'd his Seat, and banish'd crampsoul  
Prejudice. When polish'd Greece bow'd her once laurell'd Head to all-  
subduing Rome, frequent Journeys to and fro wore a capacious Channel, thro'

which to the great Victrix roll'd the proud Streams of Learning, Taste, and Pederasty.<sup>13</sup>

Cannon's final sentence here covertly adapts Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.156-8:<sup>14</sup>

Graecia capta ferum uictorem cepit et artes  
intulit agresti Latio; sic horridus ille  
defluxit numerus Saturnius ...

Horace's famous lines on the Greek influence on Roman literature look very different here, however. Horace's theme was the profound impact of Greece upon the literature and culture of Rome, and while Cannon's image of conquering Rome and captive Greece is Horatian, as is the metaphor of rivers flowing between the two cultures, 'Pederasty' is a startling addition to Horace's comment on Rome's inheritance.<sup>15</sup> It is significant that Cannon praises Rome for adopting Greek sexual practices by covertly translating and supplementing a Horatian passage which itself praises the translation of Greek cultural ideals to a previously less civilized Rome. The next few lines of Horace's epistle go on to talk about how Rome became cultured through *translating* the literature of the Greeks,<sup>16</sup> and Cannon's pamphlet precisely *translates* Greek (as well as Roman) literature, to exemplify and defend pederasty. Cannon therefore implies, with Horace as his model, that modernity can become more cultured through translations from antiquity, such as his own protreptic to same-sex love. This subverts contemporary concerns about the translation of sodomy from foreign hotbeds of vice to England, as, for example, in an anti-sodomitical pamphlet:

This Sin being now Translated from the *Sadomitical* [sic] Original, or from the *Turkish* and *Italian* Copies into *English*.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, Cannon, following Horace, sees translation as a cultural boon.

By translating Horace to make this point, Cannon subtly conflates ancient and modern. Translation is perhaps the most effective tool Cannon has at his disposal to elide differences between ancient and modern: by its very nature, translation can collapse temporal and cultural distinctions, making ancient authors speak in a modern idiom, rather than in their own voices. This will be of key importance to Cannon's defence of pederasty.

## II. Cannon's translation theory

Before we can analyse Cannon's translations of ancient texts, however, we must first explore the explicit comment on his translation practices with which he prefaces his first overt translation:

... And here let me Beg Leave to declare once and for all, that I shall patch-work, or as some may think, variegate, my plain English Stile with no Greek and Latin Quotations; will nevertheless constantly keep in view the main Sense of my Authors; shall not in the mean Time hesitate to alter, omit, and add an expression, or even an entire Paragraph, under the Restriction, that it is perfectly agreeable to the manifest Turn of the Composition, being I take for granted, the Reader will prefer a Spirited, yet equally Just Version to a dull dogg'd Translation, perpetually failing in the ridiculous Attempt of transfusing

unattainable Greek and Latin Idioms into a meer modern Language [word illegible.] I paraphrase, or, use ancient Writers only as a Basis: If you like what you meet with, is it not enough?'<sup>18</sup>

This notion of translation affords Cannon immense freedom. Cannon uses the terminology of 'paraphrase' found in Dryden's famous 1680 threefold classification of translation:

The second way is that of Paraphrase, or Translation with Latitude, where the Authour is kept in view by the Translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly follow'd as his sense, and that too is admitted to be amplyfied, but not alter'd ...<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, Cannon's translations often appear much closer to what Dryden labelled 'imitation': 'where the Translator (if now he has not lost that Name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sence, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion: and taking only some general hints from the Original, to run division on the ground-work, as he pleases'.<sup>20</sup>

Cannon's approach is simultaneously in line with the practice of many contemporaries, and highly radical. Translators during the Enlightenment show a marked preference for domesticating, 'fluent' translations which make foreign authors speak in an English, contemporary voice; as Lawrence Venuti has noted, such translations serve to make foreign cultural forms seem 'true, right, beautiful, natural'.<sup>21</sup> The domestication of ancient pederastic practices is obviously a radical act.

Such 'fluent' translations also tend to be more interested in the target audience than their source text, and Cannon's address to the reader (quoted above), concentrating on their pleasure, makes this — and his radicalism — explicit. Here, Cannon appeals to classically educated readers, able to appreciate his daring departures from his source texts. This aspect of Cannon's translation practice was surely influenced by that of the prolific seventeenth-century French translator, Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt, who had translated Lucian, including pseudo-Lucian's *Erotos*. In his prefatory epistle to the *Erotos*, d'Ablancourt notes that a 'regular' translation of this text is not possible, for various reasons, including both the need to focus on the pleasure of contemporary French readers, and Lucian's treatment of boy-love:

Since most of what is here, is only wit and jokes, which are different in all languages, it was not possible to make a regular translation ... All the comparisons drawn from love talk about the love of boys, which was not foreign to the morals of Greece, and which is horrible to our morals ... There was a need to change all this, to create something pleasurable ... However, this is not strictly speaking a translation; but it is better than translation; and the ancients did not translate any differently.<sup>22</sup>

D'Ablancourt goes on to say that he translates according to the practice of the ancients, such as Terence in translating Menander. That is, he imitates (in Dryden's classically-inspired vocabulary). Cannon responds to d'Ablancourt in feeling no necessity to translate literally, but his concept of his reader's pleasure is rather different: where d'Ablancourt had considered Lucian's theme of boy-love revolting, Cannon approves of, and expands upon, passages of Lucian that d'Ablancourt entirely



omitted.<sup>23</sup> Like d'Ablancourt, Cannon is prepared to make even some large changes in translating, with the caveat that these changes should be 'perfectly agreeable to the manifest Turn of the Composition'; Cannon is unspecific here about *which* 'Composition': his source text or his own pamphlet. Such ambiguity is typical of Cannon, but the latter possibility would fit well with Cannon's aim of giving pleasure to the reader, an aim made explicit in the question with which he ends these comments: 'If you like what you meet with, is it not enough?'

Cannon's evocation of and then direct address to the reader is worth probing further for what it suggests about his intended audience/s, an issue of obvious relevance to his translations and the work more widely. Cannon seems to envisage two types of readers. Firstly, those who share his approval of love between males, and would find pleasure in his highly coloured translations of classical texts. Such boys or men would likely already have been aware that ancient texts contained frank, sometimes celebratory references, to practices widely condemned or passed over in silence in their own day. These readers, well versed in the classics, would therefore have been able to appreciate Cannon's versions and derive pleasure from their daring, wit, and highly sexualized depictions of male-male desire. It is significant, in this respect, that Cannon marks his text out for an exclusively male audience: considering, at the start of the indictment, what 'Charm' made Pederasty so attractive in antiquity, Cannon asks 'Was it the Perfection of a gradually lessening Shape? or, you in turn demand, was it the Firmness, yet Delicacy of Masculine Limbs? Hush; the Beauty-engrossing Sex will over-hear us'.<sup>24</sup>

But Cannon's pamphlet does not seem to have been intended solely for readers who approved of pederasty,<sup>25</sup> as it was publicly advertised for sale. Cannon must therefore have envisaged an audience of more general readers, whom he could render

more open to the pleasures of pederasty by translating ancient texts in a way which shows it in an attractive light.<sup>26</sup> It is, however, one of the ironies of Cannon's text that it found a less accommodating *actual* audience, in the form of the legal establishment that condemned his work. As we consider Cannon's editorializing remarks on his translations, we shall see that this condemnation is not the result of misreading.

### III. Cannon's editorializing comments

In exploring Cannon's translations of classical texts, we need to pay attention not only to the translations themselves but also the use to which Cannon puts them. This can be demonstrated both by his overt editorializing comments on the passages and his translation strategies; I treat these respectively below.

At the most basic level, the translations provide exemplification of ancient pederasty, acting as evidence to support Cannon's claims about its high status and general appeal in antiquity: Cannon dubs it 'That celebrated Passion, Seal'd by Sensualists, espoused by Philosophers, enshrin'd by Kings . . .' which 'drew all Mankind to bathe entranc'd in Joys ...'.<sup>27</sup> Thus Cannon's first translation to be flagged as such is introduced immediately after Cannon's comments about ancient Rome inheriting pederasty from Greece (discussed in Section I above):

The Theology of the Ancients plainly Shews, they preferr'd the horrible Passion to the Love of Women; blooming Hebe resigns to dazzling Ganymede, who ever after enjoys the Place of Cup-bearer to Jupiter.

Lucian a most witty Ancient, has two Dialogues upon this Subject; in one Ganymede is courted; in the other Juno is reprimanded for disparaging that fair Boy;

both so extremely entertaining, I make no Doubt, they will be with Pleasure accepted in the Room of anything, I am able to produce ...<sup>28</sup>

Providing evidence is thus far from the only role that Cannon's translations: the *pleasure* they offer is marked as an inherent attribute of his source texts, via the description of Lucian as 'most witty' and his dialogues as 'extremely entertaining'.

Cannon performs a sleight of hand in so praising the style and effect on the reader of Lucian's works, a rhetorical strategy which also implicitly praises the apparent approval of pederasty found in these dialogues; the same tactic can be seen in Cannon's prefatory comment on the translation of Encolpius' encomium of the night he spent with Giton as 'one of the finest Raptures, ever pour'd from mouth.'<sup>29</sup> This could be a purely literary verdict, praising Petronius' style. However, it is hard to separate out the *content* of literature from other aspects, and Cannon's suggestions that ancient literary treatments of pederasty give pleasure imply that pederasty is in and of itself pleasurable. This was a radical notion in the eighteenth century. Contrast, for instance, the disapproval of the sexual content of both Lucian and Petronius found in prefatory statements by other translators:<sup>30</sup>

Ioues Masculine love this Fable reprehends,  
and wanton dotage on the Trojan Boy

(Heywood 1637, 96, on Lucian, *Dial. Deor.* 10)

Although this Fable to the gods extends,

base sordid lust in man it reprehends (ibid., 101 on Lucian, *Dial. Deor.* 8)

Blushing we read the loose, the flagrant Tale,  
And loath the Vice thus shewn without a Veil.

(Addison 1736, title page of his Petronius translation)<sup>31</sup>

Cannon also deploys classical texts to disabuse the contemporary reader of what he claims are mistaken notions about pederasty, as in the case of Cannon's second classical translation, Petronius' story of the Pergamene boy. Cannon prefaces the translation thus:

We commonly conceive the P-th-c's Part disagreeable; But Petronius, whose Experience is hardly questionable, represents him sharing in the accurst Rapture. This Master of the Pleasures to Nero introduces a P-th-c, who, over and over enj-y'd urges on the detestable Lewdness. All the Story is so high Colour'd, and Strikes with such strong Delineation, I shall present it to the Reader.<sup>32</sup>

Here the lines between ancient and modern, literature and life, are blurred, as Cannon appeals to an ancient text and its author's 'Experience' (surely at least in part extrapolated from that text),<sup>33</sup> as proof against an (alleged)<sup>34</sup> contemporary misconception about sodomy.<sup>35</sup> In what appears to be the opening of the pamphlet, Cannon had insisted on the polarity between ancient and modern, before collapsing distinctions between them via his translation of Horace, as discussed above in Section I.

Here, differences between the two are again elided, as sodomy is treated as a cross-cultural, transhistorical phenomenon. In the case of this translation, then,

antiquity can impart its superior sexual knowledge to modern men to show them that sodomy is more pleasurable than they allow; and pleasure is, as we have seen, programmatically important and a major aim of Cannon's text.<sup>36</sup>

Lucian and Petronius, then, provide, respectively, a simple example to illuminate Cannon's claims about ancient erotic tastes and a more complex one that implicitly acts as a model for Cannon's readers, educating them on the pleasures of sodomy. An example of a different order is found in Cannon's other classical source text, Pseudo-Lucian's dialogue, *Erotes* or *Amores*, in which a woman-lover, Charicles, and a boy-lover, Callicratidas, argue for the superiority of their erotic preferences, and various verdicts on their arguments are pronounced by other characters within the dialogue. This text offers a generic parallel for Cannon's own work, as Cannon purports to provide a disinterested investigation into pederasty which offers a discussion of 'the most philosophical Exactness'.<sup>37</sup> However, Cannon represents pseudo-Lucian's dialogue as considerably less detached than it actually is: he provides only the briefest of sketches of Charicles' speech in favour of the love of women, citing and translating a much longer portion in praise of boy-love. Such editorial decisions are, nevertheless, far less significant than two outrageous sleights of hand in the following passage:

*Lucian*, the Umpire, decides in favour of this Disputant [sc. **Callicratidas**], pronouncing; that for want of Adherence, and steady Courage, compleat Merit is not in Woman. ... Pray too, what were the handsome Fellows styl'd by our Ancestors, *The Curl'd*, but Catamites, and nothing else? Your nice People may call this filthy stuff; but, by Heaven, 'tis all true. The conclusive Place *Lucian* Assigns this Opinion, signifies his Approbation of it.<sup>38</sup>

Firstly, Cannon's comment on the verdict which 'Lucian' provides on his characters' speeches misrepresents the source text, where it is 'Lycinus', and not the author Lucian, who asserts that Callicratidas, the partisan of boy-love, is the victor in this dialogue.<sup>39</sup> This claims pseudo-Lucian for Cannon's own pro-pederasty camp, although, as my n. 39 observes, Lucian and Lycinus were frequently identified. No less tendentious is Cannon's concluding comment on the 'conclusion' of pseudo-Lucian, which suppresses the fact that pseudo-Lucian does *not* end the dialogue here, but rather provides a coda in which Lycinus calls for an end to philosophizing. Cannon's brief editorial insertions and comments on pseudo-Lucian thus tend very strongly towards presenting his text as praise of pederasty.

#### **IV. Cannon's translation strategies**

Having explored Cannon's explicit comments on his translations and the use to which he puts them, it is now time to turn to the translations themselves and Cannon's translation strategies. His translations foreground and valorize Cannon's goal of giving the reader pleasure, and they do this by amplifying various elements that are already present in Cannon's source texts; that is:

- (i) their sexual content;
- (ii) their depictions of males desiring males;
- (iii) their descriptions of male beauty; and
- (iv) their expressions of affection and/ or love between males.

I analyse each of these in turn, although there is necessarily some overlap. Although constraints of space mean that I do not have the opportunity to analyse in depth how Cannon's treatment differs from the approaches found in near-contemporary translators, I provide extracts from these as comparisons wherever possible.

**(i) Sexual content**

Cannon's source texts are varied in terms of their sexual content, but Cannon repeatedly eroticizes above them, by a number of means.

Firstly, he incorporates additional references to sex. For example, at the end of Lucian's dialogue between Jupiter and Ganymede, Cannon makes it clear that Jupiter is going to have sex with his cupbearer:

*Jup.* It shall be my seeking to fire you with fervid Kisses; to glue to you my pressing limbs; to mix, and make one common Essence with you.

Although Jupiter's direct reference to sex is wholly interpolated by Cannon, it utilises vocabulary that draws on a Greek sexual idiom: 'mix' as a euphemism for sex seems to have entered the English language on the parallel of the Greek use of *meignumi*, appearing, for example, in Chapman's 1614-15 translation of Homer's *Odyssey* 1.73: 'She mixt with *Neptune* in his hollow caves'.<sup>40</sup> The word's sexual usage in an influential translation of Homer thus gives the impression that Cannon's interpolation is authentically ancient.

Again, Lucian's dialogue between Jupiter and Ganymede is knowingly coy throughout; the dialogue is (troublingly) given humour and charm by the fact that

Ganymede does not understand Jupiter's sexual insinuations. However, while Cannon just about preserves Lucian's avoidance of explicit reference to sex, his translation is much more blatantly sexual than his source. So, for example, in Cannon, the boy and god discuss sleeping together:

*Gan.* I suppose, Cupid is to be my Bedfellow too. *Jup.* No; you are to lay only with your Jupiter: And, to be plain, fair Ganymede is in Heaven upon this very Account. *Gan.* Had not you now as well sleep by yourself? *Jup.* What as with such a peerless Beauty? *Gan.* Has Beauty any Relation to Sleep? *Jup.* Oh! the soundest Sleep Succeeds the Enj-m-nt (meaning enjoyment) of Beauty. *Gan.* I don't know what you mean by Enj-m-nt (meaning Enjoyment); But, if you have no better Scheme than this, dismiss me instantly, I am the worst Bedfellow, you ever knew: my Father does nothing but complain of my tumbling. *Jup.* Tumble, thou firm, round, delicate Creature: I shall tumble too; tumble *Thee*, Ganymede.<sup>41</sup>

Jupiter's reference to 'the enjoyment' of beauty leading to 'soundest sleep' is a more obvious allusion to sex than in Lucian, where beauty alone is said to be soothing and bring on softer sleep. Cannon's Ganymede claims not to understand what Jupiter means, whereas Jupiter's less direct allusion to sex in Lucian is simply ignored by the boy; by making Ganymede explicitly comment on his lack of understanding, Cannon himself slyly comments on the fact that his *readers* will of course understand what Jupiter is – and isn't – saying. Cannon also compresses Ganymede's fuller comments in the Greek on his unsuitability as a bed-fellow in order to emphasize a double entendre that draws on a similar Greek wordplay: where Lucian's Ganymede talks of 'tossing and turning' in his sleep, with a play on the sexual meaning of *strepho*,<sup>42</sup>



Cannon has Ganymede talk of ‘tumbling’. The boy is apparently unaware that this verb is a euphemism for sexual intercourse, as in scene 4, act 5 of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: ‘Quoth she, before you tumbled me, you promised me to wed.’<sup>43</sup> Cannon’s Jupiter knowingly insists upon the sexual possibilities of the verb by thrice repeating Ganymede’s innocent use of the word, to increasingly libidinous effect; where Lucian makes a similar play on *strepho* once only, Cannon’s repetition underlines his double entendre.

Cannon is also far more graphic than his source texts in his descriptions of sex acts. Some of his most explicit descriptions are found in the translation of the Petronian episode of the Pergamene boy, Eumolpus’ account of his gradual seduction of the boy to whom he was tutor, and with whom he was trusted to sleep over several nights; the greedy boy is seduced by the promise of the gifts which Eumolpus swears to the gods to give to the boy in return for increasingly generous sexual favours. The boy pretends to have been asleep and so not to have heard Eumolpus’ prayers to the gods, but these promises are designed to corrupt him. I provide below a selection from Cannon’s translation, in the order of the progressing narrative, together with the 1709 text of Petronius printed by Burman (reprinted in a second edition in 1743), since it is likely that this is the text that Cannon used:

(a)... At Night this is my Address; ‘O Venus, if I feel this Charming Creature, feel him with an uncontroul’d Hand, a Couple of thoroughbred Game-cocks To-morrow shall be his.’ The sweet Youngster hearing what I bid for the Joy, moves insensibly towards me, afraid, I suppose, of my falling asleep in Reality: But I quickly reassure him, and slide my Hand over his delicious Body; ‘till grasping L-ve’s (meaning Love’s) Bolt, spurt myself away, plunging in a Gulph of unutterable Delight.

Proxima nocte quum idem liceret, mutavi optionem &, Si hunc, inquam, tractavero improba manu, & ille non senserit, gallos gallinaceos pugnacissimos duos donabo patienti. Ad hoc votum ephebus ultro se admovit &, puto, vereri coepit ne ego obdormissem. Indulsi ergo sollicito, totoque corpore citra summam voluptatem me ingurgitavi. (Petronius, *Sat.* 86)

(b) ...Night with numberless Throbs expected at length arrives. Faint from longing Ardors, I raise myself to the Ear of the seeming Sleeper, and in faltering Accents whisper my fervent Vow; 'Immortal Rulers of the World. If I have the Enj-ym-nt (meaning Enjoyment) of this adorable Boy, I will give him To-morrow an Excellent Macedonian Gennet: But Still upon Condition, he knows Nothing of the Matter.' The dear Rogue appears immerst in Sleep: So first I fill my Grasp with his milk white Breasts; presently cleave to him in a Kiss of all Parts; then each fond Wish to one fierce Point contract. My Joys launch into Inexpressibleness: expiring and recovering I rush to expire anew upon the dissolving lovely Dissolver.

Vt tertia nox licentiam dedit, consurrexi ad aurem male dormientis Dii, inquam, immortales! Si ego huic dormienti abstulero coitum plenum & optabilem, pro hac felicitate cras puero asturconem Macedonicum optimum donabo, cum hac tamen exceptione, si ille non senserit. Nunquam altiore somno ephebus obdormivit. Itaque primum implevi lactentibus papillis manus, mox basio inhaesi, deinde in unum omnia vota coniunxi. (Petronius, *Sat.* 86)

(c) But a second Festival having plac'd us as before, the Father in a Loud Snore upon another Couch, I implore his Forgiveness; beg, he will permit himself to be gratify'd

and the Dictates of Bursting L-st (meaning Lust) to be obey'd. He in an ill Humour  
crys; go to Sleep or I'll tell Father. Resolution carries all it's Points: I invade the Half-  
resister, while he threatens, and ravish a repeated Joy. ... I wreath my Arms about  
the delicate Body, imprint a thousand hungry Kisses, and, emerging spout; Then sink  
in gentle Sleep's reviving Down. But all this does not satisfy the Boy, who is of that  
Maturity, which loves to take it: I am soon wak'd with, won't you have a Bout?<sup>44</sup>

Interpositis enim paucis diebus, cum similis nos casus in eadem fortunam rettulisset,  
ut intellexi stertere patrem, rogare coepi ephebum ut reverteretur in gratiam mecum,  
id est, ut pateretur satisfieri sibi, & caetera, quae libido distenta dictat. At ille plane  
iratus, nihil aliud dicebat, nisi hoc, Aut dormi, aut ego iam dicam patri. Nihil est tam  
arduum, quod non improbitas extorqueat. Dum dicit, Patrem excitabo, irrepsi tamen &  
male repugnanti gaudium extorsi. At ille non indelectatus nequitia mea ... Ego vero,  
deposita omni offensa, cum puero in gratiam redii, ususque beneficio ejus in somnum  
delapsus sum. Sed non fuit contentus iteratione ephebus plenae maturitatis, & annis ad  
patiendum gestientibus. Itaque excitavit me sopitum, Et, Numquid vis? inquit.

(Petronius, *Sat.* 87)

The words and phrases underlined above have no counterpart in the source text (I use  
the same practice for Cannon's inventions throughout this paper); Cannon has  
expanded the Petronian sex scenes. If Petronius is X rated, Cannon is XXX rated.<sup>45</sup>  
Where Petronius leaves much to the reader's imagination, deploying brief, sometimes  
euphemistic descriptions, Cannon routinely supplements: he inserts unambiguous

mentions of body parts ( ‘Love’s Bolt’, unambiguous at least insofar as it denotes the penis);<sup>46</sup> he expands Petronius’ descriptions of foreplay (‘a thousand hungry Kisses’,<sup>47</sup> ‘a Kiss of all Parts’); he incorporates references to Eumolpus having sex several times in a single night;<sup>48</sup> and adds ecstatic descriptions of Eumolpus’ orgasms. There is, arguably, no Petronian reference to an orgasm on the second night which Eumolpus spends with the boy (scene **a above**). However, Burman 1709, 419 records the marginal note in the manuscripts *non citra* (‘not short of’), which *would* mean that Eumolpus enjoyed the boy even as far as the *summam voluptatem* (which idem. glosses as *plenus coitus*), but goes on to reject this reading, noting that *plenus coitus* only comes finally on the third night.<sup>49</sup> Petronius’ description of an orgasm on that night in scene **b**, *deinde in unum omnia uota coniunxi* (which might be translated literally as ‘then I joined together all my prayers into one’), is fairly brief and oblique, and much expanded upon by Cannon’s addition of a rapturous description of Eumolpus’ joy as he ‘expires’ in climax. Cannon’s description even seems to comment upon the linguistic inadequacy of Petronius’ gesturing towards orgasm through the phrase ‘My Joys launch into Inexpressibleness’, not least because Cannon’s Eumolpus is *not* afflicted with a lack of expression at this point, but goes on to articulate his experience of orgasm still further.

This second orgasm is worth examining further for Cannon’s debt to the classics. ‘Expiring’ is a metaphor for orgasm already common in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century vernacular,<sup>50</sup> but *Petronius* himself had employed this metaphor in Encolpius’ description of his orgasm in a passage that Cannon translates elsewhere in his pamphlet by reference to ‘the closing Dissolution’ (Gladfelder 2007a, 58), a version of Petronius’ *ego sic perire coepi* (*Sat.* 79).<sup>51</sup>

Similar additions to the source text are found in Cannon's translation of Theomnestus' platonically-tinged description of the stages of love in pseudo-Lucian, *Erotes* 53.<sup>52</sup> Cannon translates this as:

A Lover erects a Flight of Steps, by which he ascends to the supreme Felicity; first, he paints Passion in his soul-moving Eyes: then so tenderly touches, as tho' afraid of marking the Wax-like Object; but this light Touch pours thrilling Transport thro' him. Thus advanced, he gives a Kiss; not yet the gluy one; no; insensibly joins and withdraws his Lips, to cause no Alarm in the Delicate Creature: However this presently inspires him with Boldness; he takes the fair one in his Arms, smuggles him and almost expires with Extacy: Now his Tongue plays in the charming M-th; (meaning Mouth) his left Hand grasps the Pleasure-hills: while the Right presses the gently heaving Breasts, and moves down to the sweetly piercing Spear. To conclude; master'd by Desire, he enters a narrow Passage, which carries to the Ocean of absorbing Rapture.

Cannon's version increases the erotic temperature of an already highly steamy passage by adding an early allusion to the ultimate *telos* of love as orgasm or 'the supreme Felicity'; then Cannon's reference to the lover taking the boy in his arms, caressing him,<sup>53</sup> and 'almost expir[ing] with Extacy', unparalleled in the Greek, keeps the coming orgasm firmly in mind; and, finally, where pseudo-Lucian tiptoes around with a euphemism and a literary quotation, Cannon's language, while also figurative,<sup>54</sup> makes the description of the orgasm much more explicit. He even alludes to the mechanics of anal sex via reference to the lover's orgasm being reached by entering 'a

narrow Passage'. Likewise, Cannon matches the source text's euphemistic description of the lover feeling up the beloved's groin area, but where the Greek *gaster*, 'belly', is both anatomically unspecific *and* anerotic, Cannon's 'Pleasure-hills', although vague, focuses on sexual *pleasure*.<sup>55</sup> Again, Cannon's description of the lover's hand moving down to the boy's 'sweetly piercing *Spear*' echoes the allusion to the penis found in his source, but the risqué classical metaphor of the penis as a spear is a euphemism of a rather different order from pseudo-Lucian's deflecting use of a quotation which comments on his own 'unspeakable' subject matter at this point.<sup>56</sup>

(ii) Depictions of males desiring other males

In many cases, Cannon's amplification of his source texts include descriptions of the physically powerful effects of desire that further serve to enhance the pamphlet's overall 'sexed up' ambience, already amply demonstrated in the previous sub-section. So, for example, Cannon presents Eumolpus (above at a) as 'Faint from longing Ardors', and 'with Desire and Apprehension all-trembling', both phrases generated by nothing at all in the Latin. Even more sexualized is Cannon's description of Eumolpus' 'Passion, already glowing in my Swoln Veins', which cannot help but evoke the swelling of the aroused penis. The physicality here is far from the Latin's description of Eumolpus simply as an *amator* ('lover') at this juncture.

It is not only the desires of mature men for boys that Cannon delineates, however. In several cases, he incorporates references to the beloved boys feeling desire that correspond to nothing whatsoever in his source texts:

*Gan.* O Jupiter, your Words cause a Strange Emotion in me. If you shou'd not like it, you will remember it was your own seeking.<sup>57</sup>

I rise at Daybreak, fulfill my vow, and exalt the Hue of my Bloomer's Cheeks. But it is not only the Gift [i.e. of the promised Game-cocks], that warms these living Peaches; a new Soul-stealing Desire, raised by my rambling Touches, makes itself felt within and diffuses over him a Strength of Lustre beyond Description, and even Imagination. The wonted Appearance he as much outlooks, as breathing Forms excel the lifeless Canvass. His Features are in full Play, and such a Grace dignifys his least Motion, that, upon strict Consideration I pronounce the Star-glowing Sky an inferior Object. ... [Later, as Eumolpus embraces the boy] ... the lovely Creature's Emotion is little Short of mine ... (Petronius)<sup>58</sup>

These examples further tendentiously advance Cannon's argument that the 'pathic' gains pleasure from sex, an idea that he recognizes goes against modern received opinion, and for which the sole actually *ancient* evidence that Cannon offers is the Pergamene boy's eagerness for sex.<sup>59</sup> Smuggling such descriptions of boys as the active agents of desire into translations of classical texts allows Cannon to say things that would be much harder to say in his own voice, without the authority of classical authors.

### **(iii) Descriptions of male beauty**

My next category — Cannon's expanded focus on male beauty — could be illustrated by reference to any number of passages; I concentrate upon cases where Cannon's

additions reveal something about the tastes of ancient — and modern — men, and Cannon's classical engagement.

In Cannon's version of the Jupiter-Ganymede dialogue, Jupiter is very focused on Ganymede's beauty:

And what is more than all I have told you [i.e. the benefits Ganymede will enjoy];  
your Beauty, upon which Time, ere long, wou'd have laid his shrivelling Hand, shall  
bloom for ever, refined to brighter Radiance. A Star far beaming in the wide  
Firmament will denote the Acquisition of such an invaluable Jewel to our Abode. But  
turn thy more than Starry Eyes on me: Fix them upon Mine – My Charmer shall be  
perfectly, and beyond his Imagination happy.<sup>60</sup>

Cannon develops and makes explicit Lucian's oblique reference to Ganymede's beauty, as Jupiter describes the star that he will set in the sky for Ganymede as 'kalliston'. The Greek word suggests the beauty of the boy for whom it is named, and alludes to the frequent use of 'kalos' in Greek homoerotic praise of young males.<sup>61</sup> Further, it nods to the frequent topos in ancient homoerotic poetry that the young male beloved will one day no longer be a suitable *eromenos* ('beloved') because he will be too old to take this role.<sup>62</sup>

Cannon's deep engagement with the Classics is also illustrated when Jupiter, talking of 'tumbling' with Ganymede, refers to him as 'thou firm, round, delicate Creature'. There is a paradoxical tension between the description of Ganymede as 'firm' (a word with clear masculine connotations when applied to the body) but also as 'round, delicate'. This may reflect Greek desire for boys who combine both masculine and feminine qualities, as found in (for example) Anacreon fr. 360.<sup>63</sup> It also



surely responds to the insistent stereotyping of sodomites as having the characteristics of both sexes in the invective of Cannon's own day.<sup>64</sup> Where others express disgust at such gender ambiguity, Cannon transvalues it as desirable, by reasserting the aesthetic preferences of ancient boy-lovers: compare his early question as to whether pederasty was so attractive because of the 'Firmness, yet Delicacy of Masculine Limbs' (Gladfelder 2007a, 40).

(iv) Expressions of affection/ love

Finally, Cannon greatly expands upon his source texts' expressions of affection or even love between males through a number of importations. He routinely adds endearments to his lovers' words to or about their beloveds, as my underlinings above demonstrate. Moreover, Cannon much expands pseudo-Lucian's description of the erotic element in the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus; although Theomnestus in the Greek makes a case for this pair's relations being not nearly so 'platonic' as they appear to be in Homer, Cannon names the basis of their relationship 'love' where his source-text focuses rather on 'pleasure' or *hedone* (with clear reference to *erotic* pleasure), and Cannon goes a step further to comment:

Love, substantial Love alone, did and cou'd so fast cement them. Destitute Love tore the unconquerable Achillean Heart, when Menaetiades was no more.

This interpolated comment suggests a deeper bond between these heroes and adult male lovers than merely that of sexual pleasure, despite the high value that Cannon places on pleasure.<sup>65</sup>

Such expansions romanticize the male-male relations Cannon depicts; a tendency which might seem to sit uneasily with Cannon's hyper-sexualization of his source texts. However, Cannon's pamphlet thereby offers a corrective to more modern approaches to ancient homosexuality: early apologists for same-sex love in the nineteenth century made great and influential efforts to separate out the romantic and the sexual aspects of ancient same-sex relations, ascribing a more noble version of love to the Greeks, and sexually incontinent desires to both the Romans and Greek writers of the imperial age.<sup>66</sup> Here, though, Cannon radically demonstrates that Greece and Rome both offer sex *and* love.

This analysis of Cannon's translation strategies has shown that as a translator he is highly tendentious. Through overt editorializing, he seeks to control the interpretation of the passages he translates for his readers, as all of his translations are — more or less openly — put to the purpose of praising pederasty and its various pleasures.

## **Conclusion**

In overall conclusion, then, Cannon's translations can enable us to better evaluate the significance of the pamphlet for both the history of classical reception and the history of sexuality.

As we have already observed with particular reference to Petronius, translation of ancient texts affords Cannon the opportunity to say things it would be hard to say both to and in the modern world in his own voice. This point is more generally applicable to Cannon's translations — his praise of, and protreptic to, pederasty is somewhat excused and distanced by being put in the mouths of ancient authors.<sup>67</sup>

However, distance between Cannon and his texts' praise of pederasty is not consistently maintained, as, for example, when he adds editorializing comments that express approval for and pleasure in what he translates. Translation is thus, as we have seen, an important means by which Cannon blurs the lines between ancient and modern in order to valorize pederasty.

Furthermore, Cannon's very choice to include translations of these particular authors itself constitutes a tendentious interpretation of the sexual *mores* of antiquity, serving to create the very first modern English line-up of classical 'homosexual' authors and works. Cannon's canon, to reuse the irresistible wordplay of Hal Gladfelder,<sup>68</sup> looks very different from the usual suspects whom we have come to expect will be lined up to act as witnesses in defences of same-sex desire, as I observed in my Introduction: there is no translation of Plato and little trace of him here,<sup>69</sup> nothing of the classical Athenian paradigm of pederastic pedagogy (save the Petronian parody in the tale of the Pergamene boy), no relationships in which sex is sublimated or subordinated to other concerns, no serious philosophical discussions of the nature and benefits of same-sex love. Instead, Petronius, presented as having a notorious reputation in life,<sup>70</sup> parodies the classic paradigm of the older male inducting a younger beloved into manhood; in his reworking of pederastic pedagogy, sex between pupil and teacher takes place through subterfuge and deceit, and the only lesson that this boy takes from his teacher is about the pleasures of sex.<sup>71</sup> Cannon also calls as witnesses Lucian, the writer of fictional dialogues from the second sophistic, and the late pseudo-Lucian, whose *Erotes* constitute a pastiche of Platonic philosophical dialogues. It is possible, as I observed earlier, that the selective excerpts of the indictment mean that Cannon's engagement with other classical authors has been hidden from view. The radical alterity (at least, from a modern reader's point of

view) of the representatives of ancient same-sex love that Cannon marshalls for his argument in terms of the history of the reception of ancient same-sex love cannot be overemphasized; these authors differ from those regularly used in later apologias to champion and defend homosexuality in a wide variety of respects: date, genre, content, seriousness of purpose, and (in Petronius' case) biographical reputation and nationality. Why does Cannon select these particular authors, when many others were available, and he did not need to assert his novelty and independence from a tradition of homosexual apologias that did not yet exist? Several explanations present themselves. Cannon's choice of examples from Rome and of Greek authors of Roman imperial date reflects contemporary interest in these authors (I have discussed this in this paper for the most part with reference to translations of them), and more importantly, the eighteenth-century preference for Greece over Rome (see e.g. Ayres 1997), but whereas Rome is more usually a model of virtue (*civic and moral*) in the period, Cannon uses Rome as a model of the height of sexual liberty.<sup>72</sup> The pleasures of translating authors who are so ludic and witty will surely have been one of Cannon's motives for including them in his apologia.

Cannon's choice of these authors must also look to the fact that they clearly demonstrate the pleasures of sex between males. It is surprising, but also refreshing, to read modern accounts of ancient same-sex relationships that take a positive view of pleasure and above all of the pleasures of sex. Cannon's interpretation of antiquity is of course no less partial than those of later authors, and his arguments about the status of pederasty in antiquity are often extremely tendentious. Yet Cannon's bias does not mean that he is incapable of uncovering points about ancient pederasty that have been largely overlooked. So, for example, his insistence on the classical evidence for the pleasure that the 'passive' male partner takes in sex and on the active role that boys

take as agents of sexual desire is something that mainstream classical scholarship has only recently started to explore.<sup>73</sup>

Cannon's pamphlet, then, represents a road less travelled in the histories both of classical reception and sexuality, a counter-discourse to the overwhelming majority of appropriations of Plato and 'Platonic' love as a model for 'modern' relationships in which sex is suppressed or sublimated. Petronius, rather than the Plato who is ubiquitous in later accounts, makes a strange guide to same-sex desire, ancient and modern. However, Petronius (along with the other authors that Cannon translates) can offer the modern lover something that Plato only seeks to deny and denigrate in his account of pederastic eros: pleasure, which, as we have seen, is the overwhelming focus of Cannon's slippery and itself highly pleasurable text.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Addison, J. 1736. *The works of Petronius Arbitr, in prose and verse ...* (London).

Ayres, P. 1997. *Classical Culture and the idea of Rome in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge).

Bentham, J. 1978. 'Essay on Pederasty', *Journal of Homosexuality* 3.4, 389-405 [editio princeps; written c. 1785].

Blanshard, A. J. L. 2010. *Sex: Vice and Love from Antiquity to Modernity* (Malden, MA and Oxford).

Brown, T. et al. 1711. *The Works of Lucian, Translated from the Greek, by several Hands, with a Life of Lucian ... by John Dryden* (London) (4 vols.).

Burmam, P. et al. 1709. *Titi Petronii Arbitri Satyricon libri quae supersunt cum integris doctorum vivorum commentariis.* (Amsterdam).

- Burnaby, W. 1694. *The satyr of Titus Petronius Arbiter, a Roman Knight ...*(London).
- Burton, R. 1885-6. 'Terminal Essay: D. Pederasty', 205-254 in *A Plain and Literal Translation of the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainment, now entituled, The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night ...*, vol. 10 ('Benares').
- Camilleri, A. 2020. 'Byron and antiquity, *Et cetera* –', *The Byron Journal* 48.2, 145-56.
- [Chorier, N.] 1660. *Aloisiae Sigee Toletanae Satyra sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris; Aloisia Hispanice scripsit; Latinitate donavit Ioannes Meursius* ('Gratianopoli').
- Clarke, J. R. 2005. 'Representations of the *Cinaedus* in Roman Art: Evidence of "Gay" Subculture?', 271-98 in Verstraete/ Provençal 2005.
- Clarke, M. L. 1943. 'Platonic Scholarship in Eighteenth-century England', *Modern Philology* 41.2, 103-10.
- Cleland, J. 1985. *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (ed. P. Wagner) (London).
- Craig, H. 1921. 'Dryden's Lucian', *CPh* 16, 141-63
- D' Ablancourt, N. P. (1664) *Lucien de la traduction de N. Perrot Sr d'Ablancourt Premiere Partie* (Paris) (first published 1654).
- d'Arch Smith, T. 1978 'Appreciation' in *Men and Boys: An anthology*, (ed.) E. M. Slocum (New York).
- Davidson, J. 2007. *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece* (London).
- Dimundo, R. 1983. 'Da Socrate a Eumolpo. Degradazione dei personaggi e delle funzioni nella novella del fanciullo di Pergamo', *MD* 10/11, 255-65.
- Dover, K. J. 1978. *Greek Homosexuality* (London).
- Erickson, R. A. 2016. 'Pope and Rapture', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 40.1,1–31.

- Foucault, M. 1986. *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality: 3* (translation by R. Hurley of *Le Souci de soi*) (London).
- Foxon, D. 1965. *Libertine Literature in England, 1660-1745* (New York: Univ. Books).
- Frye, N. 1990-91. 'Varieties of Eighteenth-Century Sensibility', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24.2, 157-72.
- Funke, J. (2013) "'We Cannot Be Greek Now": Age Difference, Corruption of Youth and the Making of Sexual Inversion', *English Studies* 94.2, 139-53.
- Gladfelder, H. 2007 a. 'The Indictment of John Purser, Containing Thomas Cannon's *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd*', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31, 39-61.
- 2007b. 'In Search of Lost Texts: Thomas Cannon's *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd*', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31, 22-38.
- 2012. *Fanny Hill in Bombay: The Making and Unmaking of John Cleland* (Baltimore).
- Halperin, D. M. 2002. *How to do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago).
- Henderson, J. 1975. *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven/ London).
- Heywood, T. 1637. *Pleasant Dialogues and Dramma's, Selected out of Lucian, Erasmus, Textor, and Ovid, &c. ...* (London).
- Hultquist, A. (ed.) 2017. *Emotion, Affect, and the Eighteenth Century*, Special Issue of *The Eighteenth-Century* 58.3.
- Ingleheart, J. (ed.). 2015. *Ancient Rome and the Construction of Western Homosexual Identities* (Oxford).

- Ives, G. C. 1894. 'The New Hedonism Controversy', *The Humanitarian* new ser. 4. Oct 1894, 292-7.
- Laes, C. 1998. 'Forging Petronius: François Nodot and the Fake Petronian Fragments,' *Humanistica Lovaniensa* 47, 358–402.
- Maccubin, R. P. 1987. (ed.), *'Tis Nature's Fault: Unauthorized Sexuality during the Enlightenment* (Cambridge).
- McElroy, H. 2002. 'The Reception and Use of Petronius: Petronian pseudepigraphy and imitation', *Ancient Narrative* 1, 350-78.
- Norton, R. 2006. *Mother Clap's Molly House: the gay subculture in England 1700-1830* (Stroud).
- Notopoulos, J. A. 1949. *The Platonism of Shelley: a study of Platonism and the poetic mind* (New York) [= editio princeps of Shelley 1818].
- Orrells, D. 2011. *Classical Culture and Modern Masculinity* (Oxford).
- Poster, C. 2009. 'Heathen Martyrs or Romish Idolaters: Socrates and Plato in Eighteenth-Century England', in P. Vassilopoulou and S. R. L. Clark (edd.) *Late Antique Epistemology* (Basingstoke/ New York), 273-88.
- Shelley, P. B. 1818. *A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love*.
- Smith, B. R. 1991. *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago/ London).
- Spence, F. 1684. *Lucian's Works, Translated from the Greek to which is Prefixt the Life of Lucian* (London).
- Steiner, T. R. and Langer, S. 1970. 'Precursors to Dryden: English and French Theories of Translation in the Seventeenth Century', *Comparative Literature Studies* 7, 50-81.



- Stolz, W. 1987. *Petrone Satyricon und François Nodot (ca. 1650-1710). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte literarischer Fälschungen* (Wiesbaden/ Stuttgart).
- Symonds, J. A. 1883. *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (London).
- Trumbach, R. 1977. 'London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the 18th Century', *Journal of Social History* 11, 1-33.
- 1987. 'Sodomitical Subcultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century: The Recent Historiography', 109-121, in Macubbin 1987.
- Venuti, L. 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility: A history of translation* (London/ New York).
- Verstraete, B.C./ Provencal, V. (edd.). 2005. *Same-Sex Desire and Love in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in the Classical Tradition of the West = Journal of Homosexuality* 49.3-4.
- Williams, C. A. 2010. *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York/ Oxford) (Second edition).

---

Earlier versions of this article were delivered at Durham's Department of Classics and Ancient History Work in Progress seminar in 2014, the workshop I organised in Durham in spring 2015 on translation and the history of sexuality (with the financial support of the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, to whom I am most grateful), and the Institute of Classical Studies in 2021. I am grateful to the audiences at these events, who made helpful suggestions that I have attempted to incorporate, as well as to the anonymous readers for *CRJ* and their insightful comments.

<sup>1</sup> Gladfelder 2007b, 22-24 for eighteenth-century evidence for the pamphlet's existence. Between 1749 and Gladfelder's 2007 rediscovery and publication of the indictment (= 2007a), there was much scholarly speculation about the pamphlet: e.g. d'Arch Smith 1978 wonders whether it anthologized writings on boy-love, and Trumbach 1977, 14 conjectures that Cannon's text was 'the product[s] of London subcultures in which the sodomite and libertine met together and merged.'

<sup>2</sup> Cleland had already been imprisoned in 1748 for failure to pay debts, including a substantial sum owed to Cannon: on the basis of this and other evidence (including an affidavit of February 1749 in which Cannon complained that Cleland, whom he had 'often seen write', had libelled him in an anonymous note as an 'execrable white-faced, rotten catamite' and 'Molly Cannon'), Gladfelder 2007b, 24-26 persuasively suggests that Cannon and Cleland had once been literary collaborators and friends.

<sup>3</sup> For Cleland's letter, which did not identify Cannon by name but as the 'Son of a *Dean* and *Grandson* of a *Bishop*', see Foxon 1965, 54-55; see further Gladfelder 2007b, 22-28 for the complex circumstances of the 1749 publication of Cannon's text.

<sup>4</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 40.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Dabhoiwala 2012, 130; Gladfelder 2007b, 47 labels it 'the most extensive and varied treatment of male same-sex desire in all of eighteenth century literature'. Cannon's pamphlet is not *explicitly* framed as an apologia, and, pretending towards objectivity, frequently utilizes the language of denunciation of sodomy, but, as Gladfelder 2007b, 29 notes, Cannon's 'gestures towards a moralistic stance seem halfhearted', or 'moral posturing' (30), particularly as Cannon catalogues the pleasures of pederasty 'with a voluptuary's fondness' (29). Cleland had claimed that the work was 'evidently in defence of *Sodomy*'; given the putative friendship between the men and similarities with the infamous sodomitical episode in Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, it may not be too fanciful to suppose that Cleland's assertions were based on reading a draft of the pamphlet.

<sup>7</sup> Although the pamphlet's title refers to same-sex love as 'pederasty', and the text itself contains many examples of relations that fit this word's etymology (from *pais*, 'boy'), 'pederasty' has a long history of being used more broadly to denote what we would now label 'homosexual' desires or practices: for example, *OED* s.v. 'pederast' reports the gloss to 'January' in the 1597 *The Shepheardes Calendar*: 'He [Socrates] loued... not Alcybiades person, but hys soule... And so is pæderastice much to be preferred before gynerastice, that is the loue which enflameth men with lust toward woman kind.' My references to 'pederasty' and cognates in Cannon should be understood to have this broader potential.

<sup>8</sup> The text's importance for classical reception studies lies outside the scope of Gladfelder 2007b.

<sup>9</sup> See Ingleheart 2015, 15-27 on these and other similar works.

---

<sup>10</sup> Orrells 2011, 1-8.

<sup>11</sup> See Funke 2013.

<sup>12</sup> I surmise this, since it (a) places Cannon's investigation in a wider historical context, (b) erects a division between ancient and modern (by setting modern Christendom's rejection of pederasty against the widespread taste for it in antiquity: Cannon claims, unconvincingly in light of the rest of the pamphlet, that Christianity has brought the benefit of 'the Demolition of Pederasty' (Gladfelder 2007a, 40); presumably the pamphlet's treatment of Christianity was the more offensive for coming from a man with relatives who held high office in the Church), and (c) lays out Cannon's approach, including his principles and aims as a translator. The indictment as a whole probably follows the structure of the original pamphlet closely, given that the quoted excerpts have a logical progression.

<sup>13</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 40-1.

<sup>14</sup> Cannon could have expected his readers to recognize this allusion: not only was Horace the most frequently translated ancient author between 1660-1800 (Ayes 1997, 41), but Alexander Pope had produced a 1737 version of this Horatian epistle (albeit one in which France replaces Greece and Britain is substituted for Rome, in this scenario of the conquerer conquered). Pope, who provided the Latin text facing his English version, made clear links between contemporary England and ancient Rome (see Ayes 1997, 32-33), anticipating Cannon's conflation of ancient and modern via Horace.

<sup>15</sup> However, the idea that Roman 'homosexuality' was a Greek import is very common, and dates back to ancient Rome: e.g. Dupont/Éloi 2001, 33-43, Williams 2010, 67-78.

<sup>16</sup> Particularly at Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.164, where *uertere* means both 'to translate' and 'to transfer' Greek works to Rome.

<sup>17</sup> *The Tryal and Condemnation of Mervin, Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven* (1631) A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Dryden 1680, A7 recto.

<sup>20</sup> Dryden 1680, A7 recto-A8 verso.

<sup>21</sup> Venuti 2000, 61-2 for the quotation, and see further *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> d'Ablancourt 1664, introductory epistle 13-15; tr. mine.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Cannon supplements ps-Lucian, *Erotes* 53 (see above); d'Ablancourt omits this passage, with a marginal note: '*Il y a icy une page de saleté retranchée*' (d'Ablancourt 1664, 498).

<sup>24</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 40; cf. Gladfelder 2012, 61 on how Cannon sets up the text to be enjoyed privately 'between men'.

<sup>25</sup> See Norton 2006 for the eighteenth-century subculture of mollies.

<sup>26</sup> Cannon's opening extract observes 'Every Dabbler knows by his Classics, that it [pederasty] was pursu'd and prais'd with the Height of Liberty' in antiquity (Gladfelder 2007a, 40).

<sup>27</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 40. This description programmatically anticipates the pamphlet's ancient *exempla*: sensualists are represented by Petronius and philosophers by the participants in the Lucianic dialogue, *Erotes*, wherein Cannon explicitly implicates Plato and Socrates in pederasty (Gladfelder 2007a, 51-2). Ancient kings are evoked by Cannon in the modern-day example of Amorio's address to Hyacinth as his 'fairer Hephestion', implored to return to 'thy fonder Alexander': Gladfelder 2007a, 50.

<sup>28</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 41; Cannon moves on to his translation principles, discussed in section I.

<sup>29</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 58.

<sup>30</sup> Smith 1991, 201 detects irony in 'the incongruity between the obvious delight Heywood takes in homo-erotic love-talk and the official disapproval he is careful to register first', and notes that '... he does nothing to make the dialogue less than the pleasantries promised by the collection's title. Heywood's way with the myth is, in a word, *jovial*.' This may be so — and Heywood's interest in pleasure, as signified by his work's title, *Pleasant Dialogues and Drama's*, anticipates Cannon's own focus — but Cannon's flagrant embrace of pleasure is rather different.

<sup>31</sup> Contrast too the scene in Smollett's 1748 *Roderick Random*, where Earl Strutwell is clearly satirized for his tastes when he refers to sodomy's pleasures in conjunction with the pleasures of Petronius, while trying to seduce another man.

<sup>32</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 45.

<sup>33</sup> Although perhaps also from the 'life' of Petronius, given that Petronius was Nero's *arbiter elegantiae* (Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.18), alluded to here with 'Master of the Pleasures'. For Cannon's conflation of ancient author and text, compare his labelling of the judge in the *Erotes*' debate 'Lucian' (rather than the character 'Lycinus': see n. 39 below).

<sup>34</sup> For ancient notions that 'passive' boys should not take pleasure in sex, see e.g. Xenophon, *Symp.* 8.22, Dover 1978, 52, Williams 2010, 204-7.

<sup>35</sup> Cannon talks about more than just sodomy with boys: following the Petronius story, he gives two examples of *women's* pleasure as 'passive' partners: Gladfelder 2007a, 47.

---

<sup>36</sup> For the significance of pleasure, sentiment, and emotion in the Enlightenment, and the importance in this of the 'Augustan' poets' turn to ancient Roman poetics, see (e.g.) Porter 1996, Frye 1990-1, and the essays in Hultquist 2017. Cannon's overt focus on *sexual* pleasure is tied up with his artistic pleasure in the ancient authors he translates (see above), subverting more mainstream aesthetic concerns of the period.

<sup>37</sup> Compare Cannon's claim at the putative start of the pamphlet that Christianity means that 'we may sure discuss it [pederasty] with Freedom, and the most philosophical Exactness ... free from Apprehension of exciting in any Breast so preposterous, and Severe-treated an Inclination.'

<sup>38</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 51.

<sup>39</sup> However, Cousin's Greek/Latin 1615 edition has the name 'LVCIANUS' for the Greek 'ΛΥΚΙΝ.' in the margin at the start of the text (Cousin 1615, 560) and thereafter. Such confusion between Lucian and his Lycinus is common: for example, in Brown et al.'s 1711 English translation of Lucian's *Erotos*, a preface by the translator (one 'Captain Aylofffe': see Craig 1921) seems to identify the two: Brown et al. 1711, vol. 4, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Chapman 1957, 15, line 123; cf. *OED* s.v. 3b. On *meignumi*'s sexual sense, see e.g. Henderson 1991, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 42-3.

<sup>42</sup> See Henderson 1991, 176 for *strephein* = 'to turn about in coitus'.

<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare 1997, 1731, lines 61-62.

<sup>44</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 45-6, translating Petr. *Sat.* 85-7.

<sup>45</sup> Gill 1973, 178 notes of Petronius' sex scenes: 'The more physical and intimate the actions are, the more obliquely they are expressed'. Cannon's supplementation of Petronius' sexual aspect (which could be seen as creative restoration, given the fragmentary nature of the original) forms part of a broader history of interpolating Petronius' text to sexual ends, most notoriously in the Latin forgeries published by François Nodot (1650-1710): see Stolz 1987, Laes 1998, and McElroy 2002.

<sup>46</sup> It is, however, unclear *whose* penis is indicated: Gladfelder 2007b, 38, n. 24.

<sup>47</sup> Cannon's reference to 'a thousand ... kisses' (the precise phrasing is unparalleled in the Latin both here and when Cannon translates Petronius, *Sat.* 114, where the boy Giton 'puts up his lovely Face to kiss, and receive a thousand Kisses': Gladfelder 2007a, 57) may allude to the 300,000 kisses that Catullus desires to give to the boy Juventius (Cat. 48.3), translated thus in the anonymous 1707 *The Adventures of Catullus and History of his Amours with Lesbia intermixt with Translations of the Choicest Poems by Several Hands*: 'Juventius, might I kiss those Eyes/ That such becoming sweetness dart,/ The Numbers might to thousands rise,/ Yet be too few to satisfie my Heart.'

<sup>48</sup> In passage c.

<sup>49</sup> See Camilleri 2020, 148 for Byron's use of Eumolpus' *coitus plenus et optabilis* ('full and desirable sex', i.e. anal sex, leading to orgasm) as code for his own homosexual exploits.

<sup>50</sup> *OED* 'die', s.v. 7d.

<sup>51</sup> Cannon shares this metaphor with Dryden's description of orgasm in his 1685 translation of Lucretius 4.1113-14: 'So tangled in the Nets of love, they lie/ Till man dissolves in that excess of joy' (Dryden, 'Sylvae', lines 81-82).

<sup>52</sup> The dialogue appears to satirize Platonic philosophy: see Halperin 1994.

<sup>53</sup> The *OED* cites examples from 1679-1719 of this obsolete sense ('cuddle, fondle, caress') of 'smuggle'.

<sup>54</sup> Cannon draws on the frequent classical figure of 'the sea of love' (see Murgatroyd 1995; Rimell 2006, 185-8); Ovid had anticipated Cannon by applying the imagery of sailing to orgasm at *Ars* 2.725, although *orgasm itself* as 'the Ocean of absorbing Rapture' gives a new twist to this classical metaphor. Cannon's imagery here is in line with other eighteenth-century uses of 'rapture', a word that was important to Pope: see Erickson 2016, 8. I am grateful to *CRJ*'s anonymous reviewer for this reference.

<sup>55</sup> *Fanny Hill*'s 'sodomitical' episode — which was soon suppressed — describes the younger male partner's buttocks as 'the mount-pleasants of Rome': Cleland 1985, 195.

<sup>56</sup> For the penis as a spear, see e.g. Henderson 1991, 120; Adams 1990, 19-21. Contrast the much greater brevity in Aylofffe's translation in Brown et al. 1711, which radically compresses the Greek, cutting much erotic detail as well as Theomnestus' comments about Alcibiades and Socrates.

<sup>57</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 43. At Lucian, *Dial.* 10, Ganymede responds to Jupiter's comments on what he will do in bed with his young bedfellow by saying that he will go to sleep and leave the kissing to Jupiter.

<sup>58</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 45-46.

<sup>59</sup> See Dover 1978, 52-3, 87, 91.

<sup>60</sup> Gladfelder 2007a, 42.

<sup>61</sup> See e.g. Dover 1978, 111-22.

---

<sup>62</sup> For example, Tibullus 1.4, *A. P.* 12.30, 33.

<sup>63</sup> See Dover 1978, 68-73 on Greek ideas about desirability linked to stereotypically masculine and feminine qualities in Greek *eromenoi* (boy-beloveds); he observes that '... good muscular development must have been regarded as attractive' in the classical period, yet notes 'a certain shift in taste towards effeminate looking males during the fourth century (perhaps even somewhat earlier)' (69). Dover's ideas are coloured by contemporary prejudices and preconceptions about masculine appearance and personal style, and the example from Anacreon (above) suggests the desirability of ambiguously male-female characteristics in young males.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, 'Tell me, gentle Hob'dehoy!/Art thou Girl or art thou Boy?/ .../ Man, or Woman, thou art neither;/ But a Blot, a Shame to either' (in 'The Petit Maitre', first published in *Plain Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy* (1731), 25-26; reprinted in 1749 *Satan's Harvest Home*) or '... unsexed male misses' (Mrs Cole's description of sodomites in the 'sodomitical' episode' of Cleland's *Fanny Hill*: Cleland 1985, 196).

<sup>65</sup> Compare the translation of Spence 1684, 84, which omits the Homeric and Aeschylean quotations found in ps-Lucian 54 and says instead that 'certain Circumstances of his affliction ... speak his Passion rather than his Amity'. According to Craig 1921, 144, Spence translated not directly from Lucian's Greek (as his title claimed he did) but from the French translation by d'Ablancourt; however, d'Ablancourt omits ps-Lucian 53 in its entirety, with a marginal note commenting '*Il y a icy une page de saleté retranchée*' (d'Ablancourt 1664, 498), whereas Spence provides a version: Spence 1684, 4.82-3. Spence's publisher, William Benbridge, comments on Spence's censorship of Lucian in his 'Advertisement' to his 3rd volume, asking '... the Reader to indulge him his Mercy for some over libertine Passages in this Volume, which he wishes had been omitted and left unrendred [sic], but turn'd by him in Compliance with the Importunities of some friends, who have a different Relish; though he is sensible it would have been much better otherwise, and therefore has endeavour'd to lessen the over great Wantonness of their Ideas, by a less Scrupulous following of his Author' (Spence 1684, 3, A4 recto). Cannon's looser adherence to his authors when it comes to adding sexual material may partly be a response to such approaches: where Spence to some extent circumvents such material by translating ps-Lucian less faithfully, Cannon relishes and even supplements sexual content.

<sup>66</sup> See e.g. Funke/ Langlands 2015, Ingleheart 2015, 23-29.

<sup>67</sup> Compare how, elsewhere in his pamphlet, Cannon distances himself from his material by putting it in the mouths of declared 'pederasts' (e.g. Gladfelder 2007a, 40, 54); and contrast the way in which Cannon when speaking *in propria persona* often utilizes the contemporary discourse attacking the practitioners of sodomy (e.g. Gladfelder 2007a, 40).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Gladfelder 2007b, 36.

<sup>69</sup> Cannon does, however, insert a negative comment on the way in which Plato in his *Symposium* 'pompously' portrays Socrates as immune to Alcibiades' charms, when translating ps-Lucian, *Erotos* 54 (Gladfelder 2007a, 52). Although this is just a fleeting comment, Cannon may possibly set himself up as anti-Plato, although, for all the interest in Plato in this period (see e.g. Poster 2009 and Clarke 1943), Plato had not yet gained the centrality that he would come to have in intellectual life – and in later accounts of ancient same-sex love.

<sup>70</sup> See n. 33 above.

<sup>71</sup> For Petronius' parodistic approach towards Athenian pederastic pedagogy, see e.g. Dimundo 1983, Davidson 2007, 52.

<sup>72</sup> For Rome as a negative model of vice in later apologias, see Ingleheart 2015, 13-28. Cannon's inclusion of Petronius in his apologia may also look to the eighteenth-century penchant for picaresque fiction; for which, see (e.g.) Frye 1990-91, 164-6, and my n. 31 above.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Clarke 2005, 295 in Verstraete/Provencal 2005 on the depiction on a gemstone (Leiden, Royal Coin Cabinet, inv. 1948) of the penetrated partner in male-male sex sporting a huge erection, 'unique[ly] among scenes of anal penetration'; contrast the views of Dover (n. 33 above). A recognition of the pleasure of the 'passive' partner is already found in (e.g.) Chorier's 1660 *Satyra Sotadica*, which Cannon cites as the work of 'Meursius, (or whoever writ *Elegantiae latini Sermonis*) a most profound Venerist' (Gladfelder 2007a, 47) with reference to women's pleasure from anal penetration, but this text is too openly pornographic to count as 'mainstream' classical scholarship.



**Citation on deposit:**

Ingleheart, J. (in press). Translation and the homosexual canon: Thomas Cannon's 1749 'Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd'. *Classical Receptions Journal*,

**For final citation and metadata, visit Durham Research Online URL:**

<https://durham-repository.worktribe.com/output/2024725>

**Copyright statement:** This accepted manuscript is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>