"gurgle of welters": *Catullus* and Composition by Homophonic Suggestion

Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas

> … for those French words which we are so proud of pronouncing accurately are themselves only blunders made by the Gallic lips which mispronounced Latin or Saxon, our language being merely a defective pronunciation of several others.[1]

Celia and Louis Zukofsky's *Catullus* (published 1969) has been a work more talked about than read. The notion of a homophonic translation has appalled some but intrigued others, so one finds discussions of *Catullus* well beyond the usual boundaries of Zukofsky enthusiasm. This is hardly surprising given the currency of questions concerning translation and strategies that subvert normative translation practices. Yet besides variations on the self-evident observation that *Catullus* dramatically upends usual assumptions about what a translation should be and do, there is remarkably little discussion of why the Zukofskys pursue this technique—what is its point? In fact, although the Zukofskys explicitly present it as such, it is not entirely obvious in what sense *Catullus* is a translation. Even among Zukofsky proponents, *Catullus* tends to be discussed as an isolated phenomenon, even though the technique of homophonic suggestion becomes increasingly ubiquitous throughout his later work. But like *Catullus* itself, these instances are usually treated as gee-whiz performances, without explaining how this technique relates to Louis' poetics or situating *Catullus* within the larger development and ensemble of his works. Translation or translatability as the recognition of the interpenetration of all languages is central to Zukofsky's poetics and can be understood as determining the trajectory of his late work, particularly as it culminates in "A"-22 & -23. The following will begin by considering in what sense *Catullus* is or is not a translation, although my primary interest is in the work as pursuing a procedural and improvisational compositional practice that is a logical development of Zukofsky's poetics, particularly as elaborated in *Bottom*. This in turn will lead into an examination of *Catullus'* legacy in the later movements of *"A"*.

Is It a Translation?

The Zukofskys went to some lengths to present *Catullus* as a serious translation: there is the soberly restrained, even pedantic title—in full: *Catullus (Gai Valeri Catulli Veronensis Liber)*, a note on the sources of the Latin text, the completeness of the translation including the not very significant fragments, and above all the *en face* presentation of the original and Englished texts.[2] Yet this presentation only intensifies the work's puzzling status as a translation; that is, the question of the precise relationship between the Latin text and its English derivative. The usual assumption is that the basis of this relationship is a simple, albeit eccentric, shift from the semantic to the phonic, but in that case in what sense can we call the result a translation? If we take this assumption with extreme literalness, then one

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[1] Marcel Proust, *Cities of the Plain*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff (1938): 189. Although there is no definite evidence that Zukofsky read this particular volume of *Remembrance of Things Past*, all the volumes of Scott Moncrieff's translation were in the Zukofsky family library. He uses a quotation from *The Guermantes Way* in "A"-18.407.24-25.

[2] See Zukofsky's 17 Oct. 1967 letter to Tom Maschler, the publisher of *Catullus*, claiming that the work would rank him among the great English translators (*SL* 318).

would think it would make more sense to simply learn how to pronounce the Latin text for ourselves—a task rather easier than learning to read *Catullus*.

The question of whether *Catullus* ought to include the original Latin texts is not insignificant.[3] While one can hardly question the authority of the original book publication with the Latin, Zukofsky did not insist on this presentation in the many journal publications of selected *Catullus* versions, even though he had editors, such as Cid Corman (*Origin*) and Henry Rago (*Poetry*), who unquestionably would have complied if he had asked.[4] Books with *en face* presentations of translations strongly appealed to Zukofsky and surely played a role in suggesting the technique of this translation in the first place. He was fond of such editions, particularly his dual-language Temple Classics edition of Dante, the numerous Loeb Classical Library editions he accumulated over the years and later the Soncino editions of various books from the Hebrew Bible. There is not much reason to believe he acquired fluency in either Greek or Latin, much less Hebrew, but we can well imagine the possibilities suggested by his interest in looking across the page and sounding out the original text, as well as the temptation to improve on the often quaint, pseudo-archaic Loeb cribs. However, the *en face* presentation of *Catullus* functions differently from the usual motivation behind such dual-language editions, which are intended to help the reader move towards and ideally acquire the ability to independently read the original texts, which in turn is why the accompanying translations are usually in prose and offer a faithful semantic rendition.

David Wray points out that *Catullus* and the rendition of Plautus' *Rudens* incorporated into "A"-21 constitute Zukofsky's major translation projects,[5] yet the idea of translation is important throughout Zukofsky's work. Any discussion of this broader question must at least consider "A"-9, which a number of readers, including Wray, have described as a translation of some sort, without pursuing the implications of this observation. As the 1940 publication of the *First Half of "A"-9* indicates, with its elaborate gathering of source documents for the poem, "A"-9 is not a matter of simply taking an intricate late-medieval form and filling it with the vocabulary and ideas of Marx, but of pursuing modernist, specifically Poundian, ideas of translation a further step or two. Aside from the Poundian choice of Cavalcanti's canzone to begin with, Zukofsky no doubt also had in mind Canto I: a historically sedimented translation from Homer, whose narrative is itself a late rendering of the most archaic and ritualistic material in the *Odyssey*, mediated through the Renaissance Latin translation of Andreas Divus into a modern English inflected with Anglo-Saxon mannerisms. In other words it is a text meant to "fluoresce" the complexes of historical resonances such that the direct faithfulness of the Poundian text to Homer and beyond hardly seems at issue since all the layers, including Homer, are presented as necessarily rewritings or translations.[6] Canto I is not only an ingenious presentation of the theme of textual transmission across millennia and linguistic cultures, but an enactment of the recognition that translation is implicated in all writing. Zukofsky, like Pound, was interested in the historical

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[3] Most sympathetic critics of *Catullus* assume that the Zukofskys' version should or must be read with the Latin text and lament that the latter is not included in the *Complete Short Poetry* (1991), presumably on economic grounds. On the other hand, placing the Englished *Catullus* without the Latin text alongside Zukofsky's other short poems from across his entire career offers the possibility of different readings of *Catullus* that no one seems to have taken up.

[4] Often when *Catullus* versions were printed without the original text, they were headed by the opening line or phrase of the Latin as a finder's aid.

[5] David Wray, "'cool rare air': Zukofsky's Breathing with Catullus and Plautus," *Chicago Review* 50.2/3/4 (Winter 2004/05): 52.

[6] "Fluoresce" is Zukofsky's term for what he hopes "A"-9 achieves in light of its complex of historical and contemporary sources in *First Half of "A"-9* (privately printed, 1940): 1.

self-consciousness of language, and in the first half of "A"-9 he draws on Marx's account of the commodity form as the obfuscation of the vast repositories of common cultural labor embodied in things and words. Marx on the tragic consequences of the commodity form rewrites Cavalcanti's scholastic poetic treatise on love (also tragic), translated from one historic and linguistic culture into another. It is not that the topic of love, at least as Cavalcanti philosophically handles it, has become quaint and in need of updating, but that for Zukofsky Marx on the commodity form is talking love, about a "natural" relation to things and words now obscured (see "A"-12.207.25-32). This historical and socially contextualized perception of texts renders problematic the hierarchical distinction between original and its derivation upon which translation is usually conceived.

Most thoughtful discussions of *Catullus* have found it necessary to demystify the common assumption that the relationship between the Latin and the Zukofskys' texts, its definition as a translation, is solely homophonic and to show how the semantic sense of the original remains essential.[7] For these critics, *Catullus* is a legitimate translation, and the difficulty and peculiarity of the target text is due to its radical conception of augmenting or drawing out various possibilities in the original text that a more conventional conception blandly relegates to the realm of what "gets lost in translation." David Gordon argues that the Zukofskys deploy a process of free elaboration on the basic sense and evokes the example of George Chapman's Homer, of which Zukofsky was well aware ("Three Notes" 375-376, "A Note" 115). Like Pound, Zukofsky had an early interest in historical translations, particularly from the Renaissance, which figure prominently in *A Test of Poetry* and periodically throughout *"A"*, and a number of commentators have observed the frequency of particularly Renaissance vocabulary and phrasing in *Catullus*.[8]

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[7] David Gordon, "A Note on Zukofsky's Catullus LXI: Theme and Variations," *Sagetrieb* 2.2 (Fall 1983): 113-121 and "Three Notes on Zukofsky's *Catullus*" in *Louis Zukofsky: Man and Poet*., ed. Carroll F. Terrell (1979): 371-381; Burton Hatlen, "Zukofsky as Translator" in *Louis Zukofsky: Man and Poet* (1979): 345-364; Daniel M. Hooley, *The Classics in Paraphrase: Ezra Pound and Modern Translators of Latin Poetry* (1988): 55-69; Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995): 214-224; Steven Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (2002): 209-233; David Wray, "'cool rare air': Zukofsky's Breathing with Catullus and Plautus," *Chicago Review* 50.2/3/4 (Winter 2004/05): 52-99. Wray's article should be singled out for its effort to relate the Zukofskys' translation to Louis' poetics and its sensitivity to the complexity of their compositional practice. Several further articles on *Catullus* will be noted below.

[8] First pointed out by Guy Davenport, "Zukofsky's English Catullus" in *Louis Zukofsky: Man and Poet*, ed. Carroll F. Terrell (1979): 365-370. The dust jacket of the original publication of *Catullus* reproduces the Zukofskys' working notebook pages for Catullus 85 (*Odi et amo*), which includes a number of historical translations or possible echoes of the poem and suggests that Louis consciously worked with other versions in mind. However, without further evidence it would be hasty to assume this was his routine practice, since the epigrammatic Catullus 85, as both one of the most famous and shortest of Catullus' poems, would readily throw up many significant versions, which is not necessarily the case with most. The decision to reproduce the notebook pages on the cover is itself interesting as drawing attention to the translating process. *A Test of Poetry* includes numerous historical translations, particularly from the classics, and also a fair number were incorporated into "A"-23, including Chapman's renditions from the Homeric Hymns, Queen Elizabeth I's from Horace, Plutarch and Boethius, Shelley's from the Homeric Hymns, Euripides and Cavalcanti, Robert Browning's from Aristophanes.

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The assumption that *Catullus* is to be read and justified as a translation must always posit a more or less stable under-text, the original Latin, which can therefore be used to explain the Zukofskys' local textual maneuvers as derivative or elaborating. The above mentioned scholars all demonstrate the plausibility of such an approach, but also its limitations since in the last instance it assumes a relatively unproblematic, even if complex, relation between the original and its derivation that simply needs to be revealed. While recognizing the homophonic mimicking as a guiding compositional principle, these readers have been reluctant to explicitly argue that the sonic alone is sufficient to motivate the resulting text, despite Zukofsky's apparent belief that the sound of foreign poetry is in fact effectively communicative, such that one can "tune in" to the sound or voice of universal human culture (*Prep+* 20). If commentators understandably have been hesitant to take on the implications of such a statement, nonetheless there tends to be a vague assumption that *Catullus* attempts to sound like the original so as to create Latin meaning effects for the English reader, a residual representation via homophonic mimesis. An alternative version, but even more problematic, is to argue that by re-breathing Catullus, presumably meaning by sounding out his text, the reader somehow re-creates something like the poet's original experience. These assumptions are difficult to argue concretely, however, so the inclination is to fall back on a semantic basis in order to explicate and justify what the Zukofskys are doing.[9]

If we consider the *en face* presentation of *Catullus*, overtly emphasizing the relationship between texts that is central to the very definition of translation, we can only go so far in seeing the Zukofskys' text as derived from the Latin. We will examine some of the literal implications of their interface below, but here I want to point out the limitations of taking the lexical or semantic dimension of the Latin text as the baseline for justifying the specific manifestations in the Zukofskys' rendition. The effect of *Catullus* is to blur the hierarchical distinction between "original" and translation, each opening up the other such that rationalizations of how we get from here to there, in either direction, quickly become speculative and beyond plausible determination—the Zukofskys rewrite the text called Catullus, while being written by that text.[10] The two parallel texts tend to proliferate outward as reading between them generates a copious ambiguity of interfaces. There is nothing surprising about this, except that conventionally translations tend to disguise or contain this proliferation by a reasonably clear semantic definition of the original, which is being re-presented in and as the translation, whereas the Zukofskys' disrupts this illusionism. Translation is a great fantasy genre that plays on our desire to transcend or ignore differences, to believe that we can readily encounter the foreign on its own terms or else that the foreign does not really exist because it is just like us. This in turn necessarily generates the ceaseless assertion that to translate is to traduce as an apology for translating that goes hand in hand

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[9] An exception is Mark McMorris who directly confronts the argument that mimicking the sound communicates significant aspects of Catullus' original "meaning." While I do not always find myself persuaded, McMorris' close and commendably sympathetic-skeptical reading of *Catullus* is important. See "Zukofsky's Bilingual *Catullus*: Theoretical Articulations upon the Translator's Method," *Paideuma* 35.1-2 (Spring/Fall 2006): 217-249.

[10] Andrew Eastman makes a similar argument in a fine discussion of *Catullus*; see "Estranging the Classic: The Zukofskys' *Catullus*," *La Revue LISA*, VII - n°2 (2009): 118-129, <http://lisa.revues.org/index312.html>. In *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood* (2003), David Wray evokes the Zukofskys' translations in order to free up new possibilities for looking at Catullus' Latin text. In this case, Wray is addressing classicists so that the Zukofskys' approach is used to unsettle fixed assumptions and destabilize just what "Catullus" might be (36-63).

with doing it, which assumes there exists a more or less stable original, at least for native speakers, even though commonsense should tell us otherwise.

By any normal conception of translation, the Zukofskys' *Catullus* is unrecognizable as such. For all the ingenious explanations of how their rendition unveils aspects and subtleties of the original that other translations do not, it remains a serious question whether even the sympathetic reader can sustain such a reading for any length of time or over larger swatches of the texts. The skeptical reader, on the other hand, can have an easy field day pointing out all the specific points where this translation misses or obscures significant dimensions of the original. And for all the recent arguments for the desirability of incorporating foreignizing effects into translations, *Catullus* makes other such efforts look timid.[11] Indeed, while *Catullus* is certainly estranging, one might ask whether a text so extreme can be taken as "foreignizing," which in this case would normally assume that something distinctly Latin has been allowed to affect or infect a normalized sense of the English. For most readers, however, the "original" has simply evaporated into what is likely to strike them as a weird idiolect. In what sense does *Catullus* draw us toward "Catullus"? Where do we identify the grounds of commonality between the material signifiers of the Latin text and the material signifiers of the Zukofskys' English that would define the latter as a translation, or as having any meaningful connection with the Latin whatsoever other than as a procedural starting point?

Catullus, however, is not merely or primarily a demystifying exercise, although this is how it has often been read. Consistent with a long held materialist or anti-metaphoric poetics, the Zukofskys insist on a literalist and physiologically based engagement with the text, with the letters, syllables, words, which strictly speaking must first engage the eye followed by the ear. Where the original and target texts intersect is precisely at this point of eyeing and earing the text, rather than in the subsequent abstractions from it, which is not to say that the latter are not there as well. The Zukofskys foreground the distinction and thus the interplay between the literal material text (words, letters, marks on paper) and the tropological production it generates. This makes for an unpredictable and improvisational translation practice that is really a compositional technique more than translation as normally understood. Yet their practice and its presentation explicitly evokes translation, the presence of "foreign" languages within any language or text. From this perspective, we can read *Catullus* as more a technique of bringing the possibilities within English to the surface of the text rather than primarily directing the reader back toward the Latin text. This is no more than to say that the English text refers outward to any number of historical, dialectal and foreign texts. However one defines it, there is nothing particularly Latinate about *Catullus*, and lexically or otherwise there is little evidence that the Zukofskys are thinking in terms of creating such an effect.

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[11] Venuti is the leading proponent of "foreignizing" translations in the U.S. and discusses *Catullus* as something of a limit case in the development of modernist defamiliarizing techniques (214-224). Understandably he does not question the work's status as a translation, and his analysis assumes that *Catullus*' effects depend on their self-conscious difference from more conventional translations. Venturi also gives a useful survey of the generally outraged, often comical critical reception of *Catullus*. Venturi's arguments are influenced by those of Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romanic Germany*, trans. Stefan Heyvaert (1992, originally published 1984).

How to Read a Foreign Language

We might for a moment imagine the Zukofskys or ourselves seated before a text in a language we do not know but are assigned to translate. There are a few options available to us: we might try to read the text as if it were somewhat garbled English, or we might sound out the text (assuming it is a phonetic script that looks reasonably familiar) to hear English similarities, or we might look for cognates, real or imagined. This basically covers the range of maneuvers the Zukofskys deploy to produce their translation, especially if we stretch the last to include lexical meanings whether supplied by Celia, a dictionary or other translations. Looked at this way, it should not surprise us to discern Zukofsky's three aspects or components of poetry, adopted directly from Pound, of sight, sound and intellection (*TP* Preface). These terms function to define the poem as a balance or proportion implying a structural ideal in which these elements achieve a state where they are inextricable and mutually self-defining—what for a brief time Zukofsky designated as "objectification" (*Prep+* 13). It is misleading to say that in *Catullus* and many other poems Zukofsky suppresses the semantic in order to foreground the sonic, or even the abstract sense in favor of the tactile because his intention is not to emphasize one component at the expense of another but to realize proportional balances, such that each of the three in his drastically schematic model are irreducible. Any given construction will have a different proportion of elements, yet if fully achieved it becomes impossible or pointless to precisely parse out the relative importance of this one as determining the others.

With respect to *Catullus*, Zukofsky's insistence on an inwreathed balance of the three components means we cannot account for how the Zukofskys translated the Latin original by privileging this or that over the others. Indeed, at any given point all three maneuvers are potentially activated at the same time, and it is not a matter of the sound consistently leading the way with the visual and semantic merely in supporting roles when they happen to fit in. In other words, at any moment the process of translation is unpredictable and improvisational, and it cannot be predicated on one or the other components of sight, sound or intellection. The effect is not only a crazed multi-faceted target text suggesting a highly overdetermined relationship with the original, but the original itself is broken open, no longer functioning as a self-contained, more or less inaccessible kernel within the shell of a language most of us do not know—indeed, in a dead language, so it is problematic in what sense it is a language anyone "knows." Everywhere the Zukofskys' translation touches on or fits with the Latin text, handling it with an intimacy that other translations would never dare. Yet unlike those translations, we can no longer be so sure just what or who Catullus is. This contrasts sharply with the numerous translations of Catullus that quite confidently know precisely who or what the text is: a character or voice who expresses a range of emotions and moods, alternatively witty, vulnerable, sarcastic, and not infrequently obscene, giving as good as he gets in a wildly decadent world—yet none of these translations pretend to take the poetic texture very seriously.[12] By this I do not mean that translators have not been at pains to come up with plausible equivalences for Catullus' technical mastery, but that the results are inevitably the same: we read the translations for their voice, not their verbal texture. *Catullus* presents not Catullus but a text from which we can hardly discern a singular voice.

As an initial example, we can examine the famous opening line of Catullus 5, of which Zukofsky made two different renditions:

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[12] David Gordon quotes a letter from Zukofsky indicating that in *Catullus* he wished to concentrate on something other than the "obscene," a point he obliquely mentions at "A"-14.356.6. See "Zuk on His Toes," *Sagetrieb* 1.1 (Spring 1982): 135.

Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus

Let us live, my Lesbia, and love (translated by F.W. Cornish)[13]

May we live, my Lesbia, love while we may (*CSP* 247)

We warm us may ah Lesbia what cue / may maim us ("A"-18.393.5-6)

The *Catullus* rendition is very early in the project (1958) when the Zukofskys' versions still predominately represented the semantic meaning of the original as well as adhering to conventional syntax, resulting in a fine but not particularly provocative translation that clearly echoes Herrick. Without being rigid, they have reproduced both the syntactic and sound structure of the line while replicating the rich sonic play, particularly of alliteration. There is an expert mimicking of the quantitative meter, which, I would suggest, is the primary sound that the Zukofskys are attempting to carry over, rather than the phonetic value of the individual letters.[14] While elsewhere in the same poem the sound of the Latin will suggest some of the freer local renderings, it is clear enough from the above line that homophonic transcription alone is inadequate to explain what the Zukofskys are doing.

The "A"-18 version can be taken as representative of the fully developed *Catullus* manner. Except for the proper name, this rendition uses one word per syllable of the Latin, but this dividing up of the line as if each syllable is being slowly and distinctly pronounced is partially countered by the eyeing of the text, particularly in the latter half, where *amem-* is treated almost anagrammically. Wray has pointed out the presence of such visual readings in the compositional process of *Catullus* ("cool rare air" 86-87), but actually in this and many other instances it is impossible to say whether it is the eye or the ear that predominates. This is hardly surprising given that both languages use essentially the same phonetic script, albeit English is more irregular in the sound values of its letters. In reading, the visual and aural are inextricable, and although in the translation or compositional process they would appear to each have their own logic, in practice it is often impossible to decide between them. While the first half of the line from "A"-18 follows the phonetic sequence of the original syllables,

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[13] When discussing *Catullus*, it is common practice, which I am happy to perpetuate, to use the Loeb Classical Library paraphrases by F.W. Cornish for the semantic sense of the Latin, under the reasonable assumption that the Zukofskys would have consulted it. However, it ought to be kept in mind that as far as we know what Louis primarily worked from or with was Celia's ponies, in which she wrote out the Latin text, marked the meter, gave literal word for word definitions, indicated grammatical details: gender, number, case and sentence structure (Hatlen 347). Therefore we should not assume that Cornish was in front of him as he worked, nor forget that Cornish gives versions that are heavily bowdlerized, or, when Catullus goes beyond the pale, simply stops translating altogether. As indicated in the original version of their preface, the Zukofskys actually use a composite Latin text, primarily the Loeb Classical Library text, *Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris* (1913, rev. 1924), but with omitted passages restored from the 1893 edition of Elmer Truesdell Merrill (*Prep+* 226).

[14] See letter to Maschler where Zukofsky stresses the prosodic importance and uniqueness of following the quantitative meter (*SL* 318). Both Gordon ("Three Notes" 373 and "Zuk on His Toes" 133-135) and Wray ("cool rare air" 73-74) point out the Zukofskys' efforts to imitate the quantitative feel of the lines. Gordon also demonstrates that it is not difficult to produce more exact homophonic versions than did the Zukofskys and still make some sense ("A Note" 113-114).

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is "we warm us" for *vivamus* suggested more by the ear or the eye? In any case, in the last phrase the eye asserts itself more unambiguously: *what* suggested by *at*, while *cue* for *que* is clearly more visual than aural. The final word-phrase, *may maim us* for *amemus* is a typical case where visually and phonetically the elements of the English version are all readily identifiable, although somewhat rearranged and visually ignoring the Latin syllable divisions. *May* is suggested phonically by *me* and visually reinforced by the juxtaposition of the *a*, as well perhaps by an echo of the earlier rendition. *Maim* both phonetically and visually suggested by ignoring the syllable breaks of the original *mem*, and similarly reinforced visually by the juxtaposition of the *a*. One frequently finds, as possibly here, anagrammic suggestion, where the Zukofsky version appears to be suggested partially by a slight rearrangement of letters. Even more interesting is the common practice of double translation, where a word or syllables are, say, first rendered by homophonic suggestion and then re-rendered by visual or lexical suggestion. A simple example appears in Catullus 8 where *puella* is rendered as "puling girl" or another in Catullus 63 where, as Wray points out, *tripudiis*, meaning sacred dances, is rendered "trip to these rites" (*CSP* 248, 283; "cool rare air" 95). The "A"-18 version no doubt has the earlier rendition in mind and both are concerned with mimicking the complicated play of assonance and alliteration: the earlier version neatly frames the line with *may we/we may*, which is more complexly suggested in the later version while more closely replicating the same sound values as the Latin.

The immediate point, once again, is that the attempt to consistently and plausibly rationalize the derivation of the Zukofskys' text from the Latin is impossible or at least irreducible. Although the above is a minute sample extracted from the larger work, one can dive anywhere into the text and find the same maze of tracings, often more extreme than this relatively tame example. The compositional method is improvisational, which throws into question the entire assumption of *Catullus* as a translation since, if there is no representational basis to explain how the Zukofsky text carries over the Latin, then in what plausible sense can it be designated a translation? It is as if by choosing to write within Catullus, so to speak, the Zukofskys are reenacting the compositional process, but without any illusion that there is an original act that can be replicated. By presenting their text with the Latin, scrupulously aligned line by line, they insist on a comparative reading, yet such a reading merely proliferates possibilities of their relationship and ends up explaining nothing—or too much. The Zukofskys' *Catullus* swarms and in turn tends to make the Latin swarm as well.

Let us consider a slightly more substantial sample: the following is the complete Catullus 41:

Ămĕānă pŭĕllă dēfŭtūtă	Ameana pulling, a foot touted high,
tōtă mīlĭă mē dĕcēm pŏpōscĭt,	touched me for all of ten thousand: and popped scut
īstă tūrpĭcŭlō pŭĕllă nāsō,	is the tour-picked, low-puling long nosed, ah
dēcŏctōrĭs ămīcă Fōrmĭānĭ.	decocted heiress of the milked Formiani.
prŏpīnquī, quĭbŭs ēst pŭĕllă cūraē,	Propinquity, quick buss this fuel, cure eye,
ămīcōs mĕdĭcōsquĕ cōnvŏcātĕ:	amigos, medicos, call convocations:
nōn ēst sānă pŭĕllă, nĕc rŏgārĕ	no nest, *she* is nuts, pulls her neck, rogue harried,
quālīs sīt sŏlĕt aēs ĭmāgĭnōsŭm.[15]	what lies sit solid ice imagine o some. (*CSP* 264)

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[15] Latin text taken from the Loeb edition with scansions from the *Gaius Valerius Catullus* website, ed. Rudy Negenborn, <http://www.negenborn.net/catullus/>.

Ameana, that worn-out jade,
asked me for a round ten thousand;
that girl with the ugly snub nose,
the mistress of the bankrupt of Formiae.
You her relations, who have the charge of the girl,
call together friends and doctors:
she is not right in her mind, and never asks
the looking-glass what she is like.   (Cornish 49)

Given the previous discussion, there should be no need to go through this exhaustively pointing out how the interplay of the three maneuvers—visual, aural and semantic—manifests itself, but we will look quickly at the last two lines. The first two words might be suggested homophonically but are more obviously visual, a matter of merely shifting a letter across the space. The next phrase is predominately semantic, although also determined by the alliterative pull of the line. The next two phrases are reasonably homophonic, although riding rough shod over the syntax. The final line begins with a combination of semantic and visual rendering and ends with as exact a homophonic translation as one could hope for.

While there are moments here and elsewhere in this poem of plausibly faithful semantic translation, it is not easy to see how one can be expected to recover a coherent sense either of the original or of the translation on its own terms. The original poem is a rather nasty thumbnail sketch of an unfortunate woman, but the Zukofskys are not interested in reproducing such a portrait, except perhaps as rhetorical tone. But even this strikes me as limited because the Zukofskys' poem offers too little contextualization in the sense of projecting a scene in which characters actualize themselves. Rather the entire effort flattens out the text to foreground its wild verbalism, which like its compositional process tends to constantly veer off as soon as one has grasped a partial sense. We might think of this as a cubist or cut-up text, in which certain planes of the original coherence are glimpsed but instead of recombining into perspective tend toward dissolution into the background, foregrounding the materiality of the textual matter. This certainly highlights the soundscape, resulting as in the last two lines in a rich play of alliterative and assonantal effects suggested by but going beyond that in the Latin.

A significant contributor to this flattened and sonic textual effect is the characteristic mélange of linguistic features: historical vocabulary and usage, diverse slang and constant shifts of linguistic register.[16] This can be found in virtually every line of Catullus 41, where unlikely vocabulary and phrases are juxtaposed in an unpredictable manner: touched me/popped scut, low-puling long nosed, decocted/milked, amigos/convocations, she is nuts/rogue harried. All this appears higgledy-piggledy as if at any moment Zukofsky randomly accesses the ten volumes of his *Century Dictionary*. The lexicon of *Catullus* is prodigious, yet pushes "English" beyond any known dictionary—where would we find "tour-picked" or a sense of "buss" to sort out the usage "quick buss this fuel"? Dialectal possibilities, real or imagined, are always present. However, an already obdurate surface is made more impenetrable by this liberal sprinkling of archaic and unfamiliar vocabulary and puzzling combinations, which deflects attention across its surface to the sound effects and possible intertextual resonances. The result is an edgeless text that resists the clear delineation one would usually associate with Catullus and that folds out, internally and externally, in any number of directions.

Such a wildly unpredictable poetic texture initially gives the impression of predictably homogenous verbalism, particularly on the grand scale presented in *Catullus* as a whole. It

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[16] Venuti comments perceptively on this linguistic mix in *Catullus* (216-219).

requires the exorbitant textual intimacy that the Zukofskys expect to appreciate the considerable variety of their renditions, which reflects the range of the Catullus canon itself. For example in the epyllion or mini-epic Catullus 64, Catullus' decorative Alexandrine style is reflected in the Zukofskys' version by vocabulary choices that evoke Renaissance narrative poetry:

> Wild sea mull ache rose throe wind tossing prow scudded ichor,
> turned on the rowing oar spume wisp in canted wave under,
> emerge serry fret the candent way gurgle of welters
> a choir who eye moonstruck—Nereides admire Wonders. (*CSP* 285)

While quirky enough, the shifts of register are noticeably more formally controlled than in the case of Catullus 41. Taken on its own terms, this passage is an effective effort to create an analogous rhetoric in English to the formal and decorative manner of Catullus' original, as well as being sonically evocative of its subject matter.[17] It is tempting too to read this specific passage as self-reflexively describing its own verbal texture, in which case the Nereides might stand in for us the readers. However, this tends to suggest, against the tenor of my main argument, that the Zukofskys are indeed working to produce an analogous equivalent to the Catullus original—unorthodox in manner but orthodox enough in conception as a translation. Yet if, compared with other poems of *Catullus*, 64 appears relatively restrained in its linguistic choices, there remains a high degree of unpredictability, inconsistency of tone and odd mixes of register because the manner of composition and the reading the text expects is local and improvisational rather than holistic and consistent—decisions are made at any given moment in the process rather than at the outset. More to the point, the reading effect of the poem simply fails to evoke or point back to the original, instead directing attention to the complex intimacy and interstices between texts, not merely between that of the Zukofskys and of Catullus but well beyond. While it is a good deal of fun to read the Zukofskys' texts with the Latin, it is no more, or perhaps no less, dependent on it than Catullus is on the Zukofskys'.

Soundings

It would be wrong-headed, however, to suggest that the homophonic element, the sonic mimicking of the original text, is not of preeminent importance, not only with regard to what is distinctive about the method of *Catullus* but also its legacy in Zukofsky's subsequent work. Zukofsky repeatedly insisted that his intent was to bring over the sound of Catullus' Latin into his English versions. But, aside from the difficulties inherent in the assumption that *Catullus* is an effort to communicate the "meaning" of the original via an echoing of its sound, as Basil Bunting points out *Catullus* simply does not sound like Latin, except intermittently.[18] As mentioned, the generation of *Catullus* can be understood as

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[17] In Cornish's translation: "So when she [a ship] ploughed with her beak the windy expanse, and the wave churned by the oars grew white with foam-flakes, forth looked from the foaming surge of the sea the Nereids of the deep wondering at the strange thing" (99)

[18] Bunting makes this point in a lecture generally laudatory of Zukofsky's poetry, but he considers *Catullus* a failed experiment. At the same time Bunting remarks that the Job passage that opens "A"-15 does sound to him remarkably like Hebrew, but tellingly admits that, unlike Latin, he does not know Hebrew. See *Bunting on Poetry*, ed. Peter Makin (1999): 160. Bunting's claim about the Job passage has been echoed by others, but I suspect a degree of wishful projection. If one puts enough spit on the ball, so to speak, by laying on a Hebrew-

improvisational, and an apt designation for the technique would be composition by homophonic suggestion. The rules of *Catullus* require that every syllable of the original be accounted for, as in "A"-9 and "A"-11, but everywhere one looks there are words, phrases, even half lines that have little or no relation to the sound of the Latin. Also we ought to ask what we or the Zukofskys mean when speaking of the sound of Catullus' Latin—a dead language that Louis only knew to the degree he taught himself in the process of working on *Catullus*. This is not a question of the correct, classroom pronunciation and accent, of which one can assume Zukofsky was scrupulous to learn with Celia's help. It is difficult to imagine precisely what the sound of Latin would be for Zukofsky or most of us who never hear the language spoken, unless we happen to regularly attend Latin mass, which has its own ritualized delivery. This problem of hearing the Latin in *Catullus* relates to the larger question that crops up about Zukofsky's poetry generally: for all his emphasis on music as an ideal and defining limit of poetry, it is not obvious to many readers that his poetry is very musical.

When Bunting tried his hand at translating Catullus, he rendered the first couple dozen lines of Catullus 64 then broke off to ask why Catullus bothered writing pages of such "drivel."[19] But of course beyond the joke, this cannot be taken at face value since it required that Bunting bother to work on and publish this supposed drivel, and the result is in fact a fine aural performance—as the notoriously exacting Bunting well knew, or else the piece would never have survived into his collected poems but been relegated to his well-used waste paper basket. His Catullus fragment is a richly worked text, adapting Pound's technique in Canto I of using Anglo-Saxon effects of heavy alliteration and rich verbal resonance as a culturally analogous but entirely distinct verbal texture to Catullus' decorative Alexandrian mini-epic. While Bunting chooses to render this particular Catullus in a manner that is overtly non-Latinate, his rendition has strong similarities with that of the Zukfoskys in that the focus of the translation is on the verbal surface rather than the replication of the content or voice. Bunting's abrupt and dismissive truncation suggests a certain discomfort, the feeling that such poems are not properly Catullian but artificial exercises in which Catullus' authentic voice is lost. In this respect Bunting reflects the common view, and if Catullus' long poems (in sheer quantity close to half the surviving verse) disappeared, his reputation beyond scholarly specialists would barely alter. But for the Zukofskys the very artifice of a work like Catullus 64 suits their interest in complex verbal effects rather than the projection of voice or character, since Catullus, like the Shakespeare of *Bottom*, is not so much an individual as a body of poetic texts that have come down to us designated by that name. The Zukofskys knew that the manuscript from which all surviving texts of Catullus derive, the *Codex Veronensis*, which they carefully mention in their own title, has been lost for centuries. Zukofsky proposes that the soundscapes of poems, which so obviously preoccupied him, have a communicative effect, but he is not assuming that the re-creation of the Latin sounds will stimulate a Latin meaning effect in the English language reader.

By far the most commented upon sentence in *Catullus* was planted in the preface as a cue to readers that the translators are rendering the sound of the Latin and "tries, as is said, to breathe the 'literal' meaning with him" (*CSP* 243). The characteristic highlighting of "'literal'" has often been noted, but although precisely what the Zukofskys mean is not altogether clear, what is is that they do not mean what we normally understand by "literal meaning." And what are we to make of the disarming "as is said," which leads into what is not commonly said by anyone? What does it mean to "breathe . . . meaning," literal or

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like accent and cadence, then it might sound somewhat convincing, but Zukofsky's own recordings of the Job passage do not particularly suggest this as far as I can hear. PennSound has two readings of the Job passage on 13 Dec. 1975 and 29 April 1971.

[19] *Complete Poems*, ed. Richard Caddel (2000): 153.

otherwise?[20] The statement is mischievous. Zukofsky is playing with the central metaphor of "translation": the spirit (breath) that is to be carried over into a different body is conflated so that breath and body (meaning and words) are the same. This accords well with Zukofsky's poetics but threatens to collapse any meaningful sense of translation, except for the transformations implicit in any writing whatsoever.

However, if we assume we are looking at *Catullus* with facing Latin texts, as is the assumption of this preface, then it is an effective indication to the puzzled reader of where to start, by sounding out the Latin while moving the eyes over to the English. Keeping in mind this was published in the 1960s, this indicates an initial toehold into the baffling text of *Catullus* by drawing the reader away from abstract semantic equivalence to the material text, in the sense of the visual and aural signifiers. Worth noting is that this preface was written for and published in *Kulchur* in 1962 well before the larger project was finished, and as it turns out it accompanied the first public appearance of *Catullus* versions accompanied by the Latin originals. Previously there had been a handful of printings without the Latin in various journals beginning in 1959, and as was Zukofsky's usual habit, these selections appeared more or less in order of composition, that is *Catullus* 1-16 (skipping a few). Abruptly in the *Kulchur* publication there is a leap to *Catullus* 41, 42 and 63, which does not reflect a jump in the order of composition, but rather a desire to make public samples of the decisively more radical mode we think of as characteristic of *Catullus* in general, although not particularly evident in the earliest renditions.[21] The time gap between these earlier and later translations is not great, certainly less than a year since *Catullus* 10-50 were all done in 1961, the year in which the Zukofskys began working full-time on the translations and when they discovered what they wanted to do in them. The difference between the first and last renditions done during this year is striking.

In *Kulchur* the preface appears under the designation "Translators' Preface" and is accompanied by a two-sentence "Poet's Preface" that even more bluntly states that they are attempting to replicate the sound of Catullus by "reading his lips" (*Prep+* 225).[22] This figure of lip reading has the advantage of emphasizing the visual from which the aural arises, and perhaps also suggests the necessarily imperfect knowledge of the original—I do not mean the Zukofskys' insufficient Latin but the entire question of the text called Catullus. The lips being read and voiced here, and the "him" being breathed with, are obviously enough the words and letters of the surviving texts—a speaking face they are trying to read and hear. The attempt "to breathe" with Catullus suggests a number of meanings, of which the desire to replicate the quantitative shape of the lines may make more sense than parroting the sequence of the individual sounds of the Latin. In any case it stresses the effort to reenact the poems through the process of "translation" rather than to replicate them. The Latin text, then, becomes something analogous to a musical score that must be actualized in the reading or translating process.

Presumably the Zukofskys chose to work on Catullus due to the latter's status, supported by Pound, as one of the supreme lyricists of Western poetry, despite a fair number

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[20] McMorris (219-224) attempts to tackle this last question. Most commentators seem to accept Hatlen's literalist reading of "literal" as indicating the letters themselves (from Latin *littera*) (Hatlen 348), although one is not surprised to find that *littera* is at least as broad in its meanings as "letters" in English: letters of the alphabet, epistles, literary works and learning.

[21] Another motive for supplying prefatory comments was that *Kulchur*'s focus was prose, particularly criticism and poetics, and as a rule did not publish poetry, so the prefaces offered some justification as a critical presentation.

[22] This emphasis on reading lips appears as a handwritten note on the manuscript page of Catullus 85 reproduced on the dust jacket of *Catullus* and is also echoed in "A"-14.356.1-7.

of his poems being unfit for the eyes of the young or womenfolk.[23] Zukofsky claimed that Catullus' work was responsible for many subsequent musical as well as verse forms, suggesting that Catullus 64 anticipated the oratorio (such as *St. Matthew Passion*).[24] This indicates Catullus' relevance to Louis' own poetic interests and helps explain the Zukofskys' foregrounding of the soundscape over the voice in their versions. However, if the Zukofskys' versions are read out loud, not only do they not sound like Latin, but neither do they effectively replicate Catullus' lyricism. As mentioned, the Zukofskys' method of handling Catullus' texts suggests that they were focusing on the quantitative feel of the lines and the local sonic complexities and resonances. The Zukofskys' versions tend to require a quite distinct pronunciation of each word or even syllable, which gravitates against any tendency to be sonorous and in this sense, like so much of Zukofsky's poetry, is anti-lyrical. In fact, if one moves from the Latin to the Zukofsky text, the same effect gets imposed back onto the former: one has to slowly and distinctly pronounce and repronounce each syllable or phoneme of the Latin as if they are, potentially, distinct words, since to the degree he is working by homophonic suggestion Zukofsky tends to break up the text of the original into distinct or recombined words, as well as to ignore or blur syllable breaks in the original, especially when visual translation predominates over homophonic. The momentary point is simply that if we assume *Catullus* is a translation that foregrounds the sound of the original, it does not convincingly replicate its sound in any mimetic sense. Either we have to assume that Zukofsky has failed miserably, has ears distinct from ours, or is in fact doing something else.

  As already hinted, the significance of this puzzle goes beyond *Catullus*. For all the praise of Zukofsky's technical virtuosity and mention of the importance of J.S. Bach as a model for his poetry, rather little attention has been paid to the specific musicality of his verse. I suspect that one of the primary reasons for Zukofsky's choice of Catullus has to do with quantitative verse, which held particular importance for him as an alternative model to the metrical habits of the English poetic tradition. The key early evidence for this is that overlooked "Objectivists" essay, "American Poetry 1920-1930" (1931). Although the polemical edge of this piece was blunted when trimmed for inclusion in *Prepositions* (1967), the primary criterion Zukofsky uses to evaluate the preceding decade of poetry is whether given poets have or have not succeeded in breaking free of iambics: Pound, Williams and Moore have, Eliot and Crane only intermittently, Frost and others not at all. His references to "quantity" to designate the progressive efforts of free verse poets in their struggle to break from the ghost of iambics reminds us that this was a common enough polemical tack at a time when the legitimacy of free verse and its formal justification was still a live issue. "Quantity" here does not indicate a slavish attempt to imitate classical meters, but rather an alternative way to think about organizing sound qualities in poetry that gets away from the metronome tendencies of accentual verse and puts particular emphasis on the relation of vowel sounds that so interested Pound.[25]

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[23] Zukofsky's attraction to Catullus goes back many years: there is a snippet from Catullus in "A"-8 (50), a quite Poundian translation of Catullus 8 made in 1939 included in *Anew* (*CSP* 88-89), which contains another poem that paraphrases from Catullus 67 (*CSP* 82), and a number of translations are included in *A Test of Poetry* under the topic of "Measure." During the family trip to Europe in the summer of 1957, the Zukofskys visited the major places associated with Catullus: Verona, Sirmio and Rome, as recorded in the travelogue poem "4 Other Countries" (see especially *CSP* 195).

[24] Reading at Bard College, 2 Nov. 1972; see PennSound.

[25] In the official version of Pound's Imagist statements, "A Retrospect," he remarks in relation to free verse that "I think progress lies rather in an attempt to approximate classical quantitative metres (NOT to copy them) […]." *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (1954): 13.

At the end of "American Poetry 1920-1930" appears a curious quotation from one Roger Kaigh claiming that written or printed language gives the illusion of definiteness that allows for the codification of grammatical rules and word definitions, whereas spoken language draws on the proliferating possibilities of nuance and ambiguity (*Prep+* 147).[26] We do not usually think of Zukofsky's poetics as oral-based in the sense that would become prominent in the mid-century; however, this does touch on his "Lower limit speech" statement of his poetics in "A"-12 (138), and the claim "to breathe" with Catullus is surely marked by the times—might we read that interpolated phrase, "as is said," as an ironic reference to projective versifiers? Zukofsky would not hold onto Kaigh's oral/writing dichotomy, although the underlying issue of counteracting the inert tendencies of abstract language (grammar) remain a central concern. Zukofsky did advocate the vernacular as the engine of language's constant renewal, approving of Dante's distinction between primary and secondary speech in *De vulgari eloquentia* (*Prep+* 9-10), since the former taps into a production that is prior to or outside convention in the sense of a fixed and abstract codification. Traces of this interest can be seen in Zukofsky's earlier work: his defense of modernist Yiddish "jargon" ("A"-4.12.20-21), the various examples of dialect and folk poetry in *A Test of Poetry* and the street vernacular versions of Cavalcanti included in *First Half of "A"-9*. But later it is undoubtedly the verbal precocity of his young son Paul that fascinates him, which is manifest most obviously in "A"-12 and *Little*. The point with respect to *Catullus* is that although these texts tend to disperse a readily identifiable and consistent voice in the sense normally expected from lyric poetry, all the features of spoken vernacular—accent, contractions, slang, word association and play, nuance and ambiguity, colorful vocabulary—surface at any given moment in the text. Indeed, if one begins by pronouncing the Latin while trying to make it come out more or less like the English on the facing page, readers are likely to find themselves drawing on their full repertoire of vernacular pseudo-accents in the effort. It is as if by fracturing the voice that the Zukofskys paradoxically throw the emphasis on pronunciation, where language most resists being fixed and codified, showing off its infinite variation and transmutations. In "A"-18, he includes a substantial set of quotations from Samuel Johnson's remarkable preface to his *Dictionary*, conventionally considered the first full-fledged effort to codify English, to the effect that "Sounds are too volatile for legal restraints" (qtd. "A"-18.395.27-28). *Catullus* is not *zaum'* poetry, yet it constantly feels back toward a fluid visceral sense of language. In an important sense, *Catullus* can be understood as a de-programming exercise, by which Zukofsky puts himself on a regimen to systematically break embedded habits of grammar, syntax and meter.

Over the course of subsequent decades, Zukofsky increasingly attempts to release and activate the sonic possibilities of the text and to scrupulously avoid their reduction to a single regulatory principle that underlies and tames the rest. Michael Palmer has usefully glossed "upper limit music" as "close to that limit where the harmonic density at once intensifies and threatens the signifying capacity of words."[27] The result is verbal textures that tend to require a distinct sounding of discrete words and syllables that, following the arguments of *Bottom*, ought to be mouthed and eyed as much as heard, so that musical effects focus rather than blur attention to discrete words. The effort is to maximize resonances without submerging the distinctness of words in mellifluous music. From this perspective Zukofsky's persistent return to Bach may make more sense since fugues, especially if played on period instruments

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[26] On Roger Kaigh (actually Zukofsky's friend Irving Kaplan) and his essay see Andrew Crozier, "Paper Bunting," *Sagetrieb* 14.3 (Winter 1995): 45-74.

[27] Michael Palmer, "On Objectivism" in *Active Boundaries: Selected Essays and Talks* (2008): 227.

rather than the piano, offer complex patterns of distinctly sounded notes.[28] Or, taking the example of Bach's violin partitas evoked in the structure of "A"-13, we have compositions without singable tunes but demanding an attention to the local nuance and arrangement of individual notes as against passive floating—it is as if we can hear the discrete notes being worked. In "A"-22 & -23 and *80 Flowers*, syntactical as well as metrical conventions are so thoroughly subdued that the individual words become highly mobile in terms of their possible relations and collocations—whether sonic, visual or lexical—but surely it is *Catullus* that represents the key breakthrough allowing Zukofsky to move decisively in this direction.

Bottom on *Catullus*

The discussion so far does not get very far in answering the question of what is the point of *Catullus* and more broadly of Zukofsky's increasing interest in composition by homophonic suggestion. Inklings of this translation technique can be found at least as early as the first half of "A"-9, but the place to begin tackling this question is *Bottom: on Shakespeare*, the other great ghettoized work in the Zukofsky canon. *Catullus* can be understood as realizing the poetics elaborated in *Bottom* as a meditation on Shakespeare. That Zukofsky felt there was a significant connection between these works is suggested by the fact that at the page proof stage in April 1963, three years after he had finished *Bottom*, he inserted some excerpts from *Catullus* to the very end of the lengthy "Continents" section, which originally concluded with a few brief selections from his own short poems.[29] Perhaps because of Celia's collaboration the insertion of these *Catullus* quotations was meant as an additional link to her musical setting of Shakespeare's *Pericles* in the second volume of *Bottom*, but beyond the personal gesture, this last minute addition suggests that *Catullus* developed out of *Bottom* and situates the former in a long line of texts from across Western literature and philosophy that emphasize eyes.

Buried in an odd corner of *Bottom*, in the "I" or "Iliad" section, is as far as I know Zukofsky's first full-fledged homophonic rendition. Taking a line from the *Iliad* (XX.344), he initially translates the opening phrase lexically, according to his dictionary as he indicates,[30] and then restarts with a stab at this homophonic version: "*O pop, eye! A(y) mega-thauma THAT ophthal—My Sin o Rum Eye!*" (388). The original reads:

> ὦ πόποι, ἦ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῶμαι
> *ô popoi ê mega thauma tod' ophthalmoisin horômai:*[31]

A.T. Murray's translation of the relevant passage follows (the line Zukofsky renders is underlined):

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[28] In "A"-13.286.6-287.17, Zukofsky mentions and quotes Wanda Landowska, the outstanding pioneer of the 20th century revival of performing Bach on the harpsichord.

[29] Marcella Booth, *A Catalogue of the Louis Zukofsky Manuscript Collection* (1975): 192.

[30] Zukofsky mentions that his dictionary uses the Toussaint-Langenscheidt method, a phonetic system specifically designed to make learning the pronunciation of foreign languages easy, and that the dictionary curiously gives the precise day of publication, which it so happens is Celia's birthday, born 21 January 1913 (*Bottom* 388).

[31] The Greek text is from the Loeb Classical Library edition of the *Iliad*, 2 vols., trans. A.T. Murray (1924), while the romanization is taken from *The Perseus Digital Library*, ed. Gregory R. Crane. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper>.

Then quickly from Achilles' eyes he scattered the wondrous mist; and he stared hard with his eyes, and mightily moved spake unto his own great-hearted spirit: "Now look you, verily a great marvel is this that mine eyes behold. My spear lieth here upon the ground, yet the man may I nowise see at whom I hurled it, eager to slay him." (397)

Within the context of *Bottom*, Zukofsky obviously is interested in this passage's emphatic emphasis on eyes. His transliteration has a whimsical feel crossing popular culture references (Popeye, possible reference to cinorama but in any case to the cinema < Sin o rum Eye) with *Bottom*'s emphasis on seeing.[32] However, it is something more than that within the larger context of the "Iliad" section, where a few pages earlier Zukofsky explicitly offers several efforts at sounding like Homer (384), although in this instance the results are a relatively conservative effort to homophonically maintain the etymological roots of key words, also evident in this wilder rendition. Throughout this particular section of *Bottom*, Zukofsky produces his own versions from Homer, contrary to his usual practice in this and other works of relying on the popular prose translations of W.H.D. Rouse.[33] While these suggestions in *Bottom* are by no means extensive nor pursued systematically, they indicate Zukofsky is thinking about the possibilities of phonetic transcriptions mimicking sonic elements of the original around the time he and Celia began work on *Catullus* in 1958, although they too started off quite conservatively.

In fact it is not apparent that the Zukofskys knew exactly what they wanted to do when they began working on *Catullus*, since, as many commentators have noted, the earliest translations are in a familiar modernist manner—some liberties taken but nothing too out of the ordinary for poetic translations. Given the remarks in *Bottom* as well as Pound's prior example, it is hardly surprising that one can intermittently discern the sound being carried over. As mentioned, when the Zukofskys took up *Catullus* again in 1961 with Catullus 10, they continued where they left off, but then quite rapidly moved towards a strongly homophonic and improvisational manner. By this time, Zukofsky rarely revised a work or section once finished and never did so once published, so in working on sequential works such as *Catullus* or *80 Flowers* once a particular poem was done he did not revisit it even when the conception of the larger project shifted somewhat in process.[34] In the case of *Catullus*, this indicates that the more extreme possibilities of homophonic suggestion developed in the very process of working on the renditions, encouraged by the rules of the

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[32] It may or may not be relevant that during the 1950s there was an animated episode of Popeye called "Greek Mirthology" that explains the classical origins of Popeye's spinach empowerment. In any case the suggested analogy between Achilles and Popeye is not altogether inappropriate.

[33] Previously Zukofsky made "adaptations" from Book XI of the *Odyssey* for *A Test of Poetry* (4-5, 117), apparently instigated by his failure to obtain Pound's permission to use his version from Canto I (*WCW/LZ* 397-398; Ahearn's note says Zukofsky wrote Pound for permission in June 1947, but this appears to be a misprint for 1948 (see *EP/LZ* 206)). He thought well enough of these efforts to incorporate them into "A"-12, primarily to frame the letters from "A Poor Pay Pfc" Jackie ("A"-12.215-216, 218, 221, 223, 261), although again elsewhere in that movement passages from Homer are taken straight from Rouse.

[34] In discussing *80 Flowers*, Michele J. Leggott details the various apparent rethinks of the project in process, particularly with respect to the list of flowers Zukofsky would use; see *Reading Zukofsky's "80 Flowers"* (1989): 19-27. There is an exception to the Zukofskys' sequential working through the Catullus canon as traditional arranged, because Catullus 64, by far the longest of the poems, was skipped and returned to last, which they finished during a stint at the Yaddo artists retreat from Dec. 1965 through Feb. 1966.

game in which each syllable must be accounted for and a working method whereby Celia's spadework broke the texts down into minute discrete and multi-faceted units and complexes.

Whether or not the hints in the "Iliad" section are the seeds of the *Catullus* technique, the important question is how the larger concerns of *Bottom* relate to whatever it is Zukofsky was attempting in *Catullus*. For present purposes, two key points of *Bottom*'s argument concern us: anti-perspectivism and a diffused intentionality.[35] What has irritated and bamboozled readers of *Bottom* more than anything else is Zukofsky's focus on the verbal texture of Shakespeare as against the usual habits of reading him in terms of plot, characterization and verisimilitude. As many have pointed out, in his reading of Shakespeare Zukofsky tends to ignore the contexts of character and plot, and this has been seen as an inexcusable violence to the plays, although such an indictment only holds if one assumes a basic dramatic verisimilitude as the necessary vehicle of meaning, which Zukofsky clearly does not. *Bottom*'s insistence on eyes, on Shakespeare's own insistence on seeing, is a call to look at the physical text, not through it. This is not a naïve empiricism or radical anti-abstractionism, but a resistance to ordinary habits of projection, which inevitably tend to privilege those projections and impose them back onto the "literal" text from which they arose. Most obviously, Zukofsky is concerned to recover the material and bodily dimensions of writing and reading, which tend to evaporate into "meaning" or representational verisimilitude. So Zukofsky flattens out the texts and reads them as performative, texts that engage the audience/reader in the visual and musical surface of the language which embody and affect complex states of being. As he suggests, the text reads or performs the reader as much as the other way around (66).

The second point is that Zukofsky conceives of Shakespeare's texts not as the expression of a specific author, but as embodying an intentionality pervasive throughout the body of works named "Shakespeare" and beyond. As he states at the outset, Shakespeare is no more than the body of texts so designated that have come down to us (13), and the long section, "Continents," demonstrates that the theme of eyes and seeing that Zukofsky so compulsively traces through Shakespeare's texts is in no sense unique, individual or even necessarily conscious, but evident throughout Western literature and thought before and since Shakespeare. It is less a matter of what Shakespeare's poetry says in a narrowly semantic sense, than what is enacted in reading him that is Zukofsky's interest.

On this point, we might profitably consider one of the more bizarre passages in all of Zukofsky's work found in "Poetry/*For My Son When He Can Read*" (1946), an essay he meant to be his major statement on poetics aside from *Bottom* itself. Here he quotes a translation of a Chinese poem by Yuan Chen (c. 1800), notes that the English version (by Arthur Waley) strikes him as mediocre, and then offers a speculative paraphrase of its meaning: he imagines that the poem is actually a suicide note telling a friend to enjoy and live a long life. The poem or its translation says nothing of the sort but is a dream poem in which the poet's dead wife fleetingly returns in the figure of a pitcher in a well that quickly sinks back beneath the surface (*Prep+* 4-6). Zukofsky's reading is not intended as a type of psychoanalytical interpretation claiming to uncover the psychic mainsprings of the poet disguised in the poem, but rather states what is implied in any writing or reading whatsoever. He offers the extreme case of the negation of life, the ultimate skeptic if you like, but the gesture of the suicide note necessarily implies an orientation towards the living, a desire for others, even at the moment of seeming negation, and therefore the continued existence of that intention or desire beyond the physical death of the suicide. The extremity of the example—across time, cultures and languages—merely highlights the point. One might take this as an

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[35] I have elaborated on these and other issues in *Bottom* in "Keep Your Eyes on the Page: Zukofsky's *Bottom: on Shakespeare*," *Paideuma* 39 (2012): 209-247.

extravagant image of mediated communications in which, like Chinese whispers, there is an undeniable chain of connection, yet any given linkage is unpredictable so that there is no identifiable sameness that exists throughout the entire process except for a generalized performative intentionality that seeks others. Whether or not we can recapture the original sense of Yuan Chen's poem—and critically we always know that that is impossible—does not mean we are walled out, that we do not extend the afterlife of the poem. It is the mind detached from its sensual context, from being in the world with others that would doubt the human contact enacted in the immediacy of reading the text, that would suppress that very act that gives rise to its doubting in the first place and substitutes an abstracted meaning as the only valid level of identity.

Turning to *Catullus*, we have already noted that there is an insistence on closely eyeing and sounding the Latin text or its translation such that the texts are flattened out and it is difficult to project perspective with a unique voice and dramatic setting. These elements are by no means absent from the Zukofskys' renditions, but they exist primarily on and in the verbal surface rather than as dramaturgic projection. The Zukofskys suggest that the point of contact across distances of time, culture and languages must reside in the sensual contact with the words, rather than in the self-reflective illusions of identity that lack sufficient resistance from the other. As Zukofsky puts it in *Bottom*, "Today the literary theologian reads Shakespeare and oversees his own spruce theology" (99); that is, readers of Shakespeare create their own contexts and projections called "Shakespeare" and then busy themselves with the various consequences of this projection, all of which presumably arises from the "literal" words on the page that have in the process been repressed. In other words, most discussion of Shakespeare is metaphysics. However, the Zukofskys' position is certainly not that of radical skepticism since of course Shakespeare and Catullus undeniably speak to us, they speak to us as a designated body of texts that resonate through and from the larger world of texts, just as Yuan Chen's poem comes across however mediated its path. Whether it arrives as depleted or not depends on the reader's activation. Zukofsky was unwilling to accept that Chaucer or Anglo-Saxon poetry, French, Greek or Chinese were simply lost to us as they all hail us, call to us from some assumed basis of human commonality, with the aim of uniting with others in friendship, as he puts it in *Bottom* (92). This friendship, explicitly taken from Aristotle's conception of the human need for others, involves an "inexpressible *trust of expression*" (91)—what language says is not what it says. Trust of language implies not getting hung up on meaning as a fixed equivalence but recognizing the meaningfulness of acts of language.

Turning back to the "Iliad" section of *Bottom*, we might consider the larger context which apparently provokes Zukofsky's tantalizingly brief remarks on the possibilities of homophonic translation. Like a number of other sections in *Bottom*, the structure of the "Iliad" section appears a simple juxtaposition of scattered lines from the *Iliad* with their supposedly echoes in Shakespeare, mostly but not all programmatically offering explicit reference to *Bottom*'s overriding concern with eyes and sight. These relationships are not instances of influence as ordinarily understood; that is, they are not narrative chains drawing straight lines between prior and later textual events. They are, if you like, merely serendipitous echoes, but for Zukofsky this is precisely how texts interrelate across times, languages and individual readers-writers. Whether or not Shakespeare directly read Homer— and Ben Jonson would assure us this was not likely—they are necessarily related textually so that when Zukofsky reads Homer he sees and hears Shakespeare, or vice versa since there is no question of a prior text determining a later one, except in the spruce theologies that preoccupy a great deal of scholarly endeavor. As mentioned, in the "Iliad" section Zukofsky is trying his hand at his own translations from the *Iliad* and clearly consulting the Greek text, rather than merely reworking the translations of Rouse and Murray, since he gives specific

line numbers and occasionally refers to Greek words. As Zukofsky reads Homer in translation looking for echoes of Shakespeare and then reworks the translations of such speculative points of contact while consulting the Greek text, he listens to how the Greek transforms itself in Shakespeare. Although by and large Zukofsky does not go beyond toying with this idea in these renditions from the *Iliad*, he clearly feels that poetry cannot be translated without carrying over something of its sensual texture, embodying its urge towards music. The point here is that this is not merely a matter of Zukofsky's stubborn faith in the musical component of poetry, but his perception of the poetic text as necessarily flooded with other texts and languages (that ghostly pitcher rising to the surface) that can by no means be accounted for or even recognized solely on the basis of semantic equivalence. The aural is not a substitute for or alternative to the semantic, which inevitably remains integral, but it off-sets the dominating propensities of the latter and therefore allows for a reorientation towards the physical texts that recognizes their swarming nature. Hearing the text, which relies in the first instance on eyeing it, opens up its relations, including its semantic possibilities, both intra- and inter-textual—puns being the simplest and most obvious example. Indeed to the extent that *Catullus* is constructed on homophonic principles, its technique implicates punning's short-circuiting of the metaphysical propensities of semantics in order to draw relations that rely on eye (including anagrams) and ear between meanings conventionally kept distinct.

Immediately following the homophonic translation from the *Iliad* discussed above, Zukofsky slips into one of those oblique digressions so characteristic of *Bottom*. Here he offers one of his many schematic parables on the fate of language: "[…] The poet perfects the mother tongue with eyes and ears until grammarian and metaphysician see the structures of paradigm in him. His fate then—or choice—is a poetry of grammar, or to forget grammar or hack it" (391). Language that sees and hears, language that is seen and heard, resists the ossifying tendencies of abstraction, thought that represses its origins in sensation and the body and reimposes itself back onto that body, in this case the textual body. The eyes of abstraction are blind to the body or the text and instead see their own "structures of paradigm," what Dante called "secondary speech" (qtd. *Prep+* 10). Zukofsky then goes on to draw out the political implications through quotations from *Henry VI, Part Two* where Jack Cade and his rebellious followers pose themselves against literacy and the learned, the self-consciously correct language of the aristocracy, which has consequences in the form of that metaphysical grammar called the law that are expressed without irony by Lord Say in the language of tropes: "Great men have reaching hands. Oft have I struck / Those that I never saw, and struck them dead" (IV.vii.86-87; qtd. *Bottom* 391). Cade draws out the point:

> Thou has most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school; […]. It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear. Thou hast appointed justices of peace, to call poor men before them about matters they were not able to answer. Moreover, thou has put them in prison, and because they could not read, thou hast hang'd them; when, indeed, only for that cause they have been most worthy to live. (IV.vii.34-36, 40-49; qtd. *Bottom* 391)

Typically Zukofsky violates the integrity of the dramatic presentation to bring these passages into direct dialogue, since as mentioned he is little interested in dramatic presentation and characterization compared with seeing and listening to the text. To read Zukofsky's stance as merely anti-metaphysical or anti-grammatical or pro-Cade is to fall into the very dualisms which bad metaphysics propagates: it is precisely the enforcement of absolute distinctions rather than the recognition of their mutual definition that enables the predatory consequences

of abstraction. What concerns Zukofsky is a language of grammar or law that lacks eyes except for itself and therefore fails to site itself in the world, blind to the actual bodies effected.

If it appears that we have strayed from *Catullus*, what is of interest here is the proximity of these remarks on the social consequences of an abstract perception of language, central to the entire argument of *Bottom*, with Zukofsky's thinking about translation and particularly the possibilities of homophonic translation. Homophonic translation insists on an immediate bodily engagement with the text that remains unpredictable in terms of its relations, open to echoes and resonances that will necessarily vary according to community, group or individual reader, even individual readings. Unpredictable does not mean random, unless we mean by that term overdetermined. Of the poet's options vis-à-vis grammar that Zukofsky mentions above, his choice is to "hack it," the effort to work with or towards a language in a state of relative non-socialization or of openness to alternatives within languages' possibilities. From this perspective *Catullus* appears as Zukofsky's major effort to radically pursue the consequences of this position and lays the groundwork for his final works. Indeed, we can imagine that the sort of rigorous exercise involved in the composition of *Catullus* as a deliberate effort at de-programming (hacking) English habits by hewing to a foreign text in such a "literal" manner. Although superficially less radical, the post-*Bottom* movements of *"A"* composed in and around the same time as *Catullus*, "A" 13-21 (1960-67), move in their various ways toward a syntactically liberated language. With "A"-18 and -21 and culminating in "A"-22 & -23 the seeming abandonment of conventional, that is, recognizable syntax and grammar, along with other normal hierarchical indicators creates a depthless and unbounded textual surface.[36] These texts tend toward a radical nominalism in which discrete words, even syllables have a relative degree of autonomy and potentially can collocate with any others. Such a text insists on its immediacy, requiring the reader to handle, eye and sound the discrete words and to feel their resonances and intricate maneuverings. We are now so habituated to such poetry that it is difficult to recognize how far out this was in the mid-1960s, but very quickly around 1970 many younger poets would begin to feel they had permission to write in such a manner.

Catullus and the Late Zukofsky

When all is said and done, in *Catullus* Zukofsky pursues a compositional method that extends long-held assumptions and practices: 1) writing is always rewriting, which the process of translation or homophonic transmutation makes overt, and was Zukofsky's predominate practice since "Poem beginning 'The'"; 2) the dissemination of the lyrical subject into the polyvocality of the textual surface, emphasizing its performative function, which is to say its sociability; 3) musicality, meaning the foregrounding and exploration of the sonic possibilities of the text, as well as a tactile engagement with the material text, whether as writer or reader. The intention of *Catullus* neither faithfully moves us toward the original, nor the original towards a modernist present. Rather the Zukofskys' *Catullus* works within the interstices that potentially imply all languages of all times: those mispronunciations that become recognizable as pronunciations. *Catullus* is less a translation as ordinarily understood than an effort to open up a text to all the infinite affiliations and pathways that might lead from Catullus' text to any given reader—not a literal effort to do that, which would be futile and pointless, but to suggest the effect of that echoing

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[36] Peter Quartermain has pointed out the importance of both *Bottom* and *Catullus* in preparing the way for Zukofsky's later poetry; "'Only Is Order Othered. Nought Is Nulled': *Finnegans Wake* and Middle and Late Zukofsky" in *Disjunctive Poetics* (1992): 104.

overdetermination. Readers, as always, will make of it what they can, but as they read the lips of the Zukofskys, with or without those of Catullus in mind, they will mispronounce each according to their own nature (as Spinoza would put it) and "'tune in' to the human tradition"—a tradition that is the condition of babel.

One might think the long and intensive labor on *Catullus* would exhaust Zukofsky's interest in the homophonic technique, but in fact his enthusiasm clearly waxed and it encouraged him to try his hand at a variety of other languages. While on one hand the Zukofskys seem to have felt their way toward the homophonic emphasis without bothering to cover their tracks, on the other there is no reason to view the final result as a simple apotheosis, as a straightforward and clearly delimited realization of the technique. I have suggested that *Catullus* served as de-programming exercise, a regime that worked the ear and prepared for the more liberated syntax of the late work. What is important in *Catullus* is not so much whether it sounds like Latin but that it sounds, foregrounds the noise and babble of possibilities within English that also suggests the points where English begins to dissolve into any number of other languages, both actual and possible. From there, *Catullus* offered Zukofsky the license to work with any text for which he had a romanized version that he could sound out (he evidently taught himself to phonetically read Hebrew as well). This culminates in "A"-23, where I would estimate roughly half the lines of the main body are partially or wholly generated by homophonic suggestion. Beginning in "A"-14 (1964), the first long movement composed after the Zukofskys were well into the *Catullus* project, there are scattered bits of homophonic renderings throughout the later work. The major instances are the passage from the Book of Job at the beginning of "A"-15 and the versions from Medieval Welsh poetry in *Little*. In the last works, "A"-22 & -23 and *80 Flowers*, the homophonic technique can crop up anywhere. "A"-22 & -23, particularly the latter, include substantial passages of homophonic renderings from Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Old English, with shorter passages from Sanskrit, Welsh, Provençal and Spanish. In addition there are individual lines, phrases and words homophonically generated from close to ten further languages.[37] That Zukofsky would so actively continue with the homophonic technique in an ever more unsystematic and improvisational manner throughout the rest of his life indicates that *Catullus* convinced him that its value went well beyond any meaningful claims of translation.

Both the motivation and technique of these later instances of homophonic transmutation are even less straightforward than in the case of *Catullus*. The latter is explicitly presented as a translation and therefore our reading will always be shadowed by that contextualization. This is also the case, but further complicated, with the Job passage that opens "A"-15, which includes reiterated mentions of the Hebrew Iyyob and well as Yahweh to clue the reader into the source, which not only immediately brings on board considerable cultural baggage and themes, but also hints at what has been done to the Hebrew, particularly if the reader is aware of *Catullus*. At the same time the passage needs to be read within the larger complex of the movement itself, although I am not aware that anyone has ventured to do so (see Z-Notes commentary on "A"-15).

Later in "A"-15 we encounter an instance set off on its own in which we are given no such framing—no clue as to what we are reading:

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[37] It is also worth mentioning the improvisations on Mallarmé's poems early in "A"-19, which involve some homophonic suggestion but are mainly translated in a more conventional manner, even if the result is anything but. French was the foreign language Zukofsky knew best, which is not necessarily an advantage for homophonic renderings, and it is notable that there is very little from French (as opposed to Provençal) in "A"-23.

Eros agh nick hot hay mock on Eros us inked massy pipped eyes
Now on th'heyday caught as thus mown (370)

"A"-15 is the last predominately collage movement of *"A"*, and mostly it is at least reasonably grammatical in manner—with the obvious exception of the opening Job passage—so that these couple of lines seem to come out of the blue. In the first instance this is likely to strike us as noise, as disconcerting interference. As such these lines might serve to bring the reader up short and ask for a careful eyeing and mouthing, that is, a reminder that we will always encounter problems with *"A"* if we persist in reading merely for what the poem says. However, if we are not simply put off, these lines actually do say a fair bit, even if they foil any attempt to confidently paraphrase them. We have first of all Eros and the suggestion that Eros mocks us, which must relate somehow to the immediately preceding lines, which mention in a puzzling manner passionate love in a Biblical context. This is all the more interesting in that eros is virtually non-existent in Zukofsky's poetry, but this is not the place to pursue that topic. There is also mention and play on mowing hay in the heat of the day or late summer. If we try to put this together then perhaps it intimates that Eros has a short wick, burns intensely and comes to a climax (heyday) but is self-destructive, although "mown" might also suggest a harvest. I have always read at least the first half-line as aurally and rhythmically mimicking a sense of heated agitation, but this may be no more than picking up semantic traces and projecting them back onto the soundscape. Given that the overall concerns of "A"-15, whose central event is the assassination and funeral of President Kennedy, is with historical violence, we might see an unbounded Eros as a contributing factor, although the preceding lines on passionate love in the Bible appear to take an ambivalent attitude on this topic, an ambivalence our lines seem to maintain. Eros as the intense desire for others (love), presumably the desire inherent in any poetry or language, also perhaps self-destructively demands too much, or alternately is socially repressed and then manifests itself as violence.

We might linger over the curious phrase "inked massy pipped eyes," suggesting a self-reflexive scene of reading, a relation between ink and eyes. If we read this as indicating an identity between ink and eyes ("I" and "eyes"), this is a very Zukofskian motif: the "I" both sited and disseminated by the eyes, the "eyes" siting the "I" within the text. The coupling of "massy pipped" is also intriguing—both aurally and semantically a seemingly antithetical pair. Is ink diffuse (massy or messy), out of which the eyes pick out points (seeds) of focus? Is the textual world a mass or totality of which eyes can only see small bits. Or is this a string of three adjectives all modifying eyes? Whenever we have writing, reading and eyes in the Zukofskian scheme of things, then love is in the driver's seat, whether realized or thwarted.

I have deliberately delayed identifying the source of these lines to see what we can make of them on their own since Zukofsky does not present them as an allusion. The key to this and innumerable other passages is not source hunting and then treating the source text as ventriloquizing and authorizing Zukofsky's views. The lines in fact homophonically render two separate lines (lines 781 & 801) from a chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone*:

Ἔρως ἀνίκατε μάχαν, Ἔρως, ὃς ἐν κτήμασι πίπτεις,[…]
Erôs anikate machan, Erôs, hos en ktêmasi pipteis,[…]
Eros agh nick hot hay mock on Eros us inked massy pipped eyes […]

Love [Eros] resistless in fight, all yield at a glance of thine eye, […]

νῦν δ' ἤδη 'γὼ καὐτὸς θεσμῶν
nun d' êdê 'gô kautos thesmôn
Now on th'heyday caught as thus mown

Lo I myself am borne aside.[38]

Zukofsky's version adheres strictly to the *Catullus* procedure of accounting for every syllable, yet clearly he has maintained something of the original sense in a suggestively ambiguous manner, particularly picking up on and augmenting what Storr translates as "bourne aside." One also notices the tendency, as we noted in *Catullus*, to break down longer words of the original into one or two syllables words as he carefully, perhaps laboriously, enunciates while listening to the Greek text. If in one sense, Zukofsky has de-imagized the original in that we cannot visually focus what is said overall, on the other he has suggested a more concrete image in mown hay on a hot day. This concreteness is enhanced by the homophonic manner because, if we do not simply glaze or skip over it, we too are required to closely articulate and consider the individual words and syllables, to mouth and eye them.

One could no doubt make a fair bit of hay by plugging these lines back into the full chorus or the larger play (is the figure of Jackie Kennedy a type of Antigone? the rights and rites of mourning as individual or as nation, etc.), but this seems to me beyond reason because as mentioned these lines simply cannot function as an allusion given Zukofsky's manner of presentation. That *Antigone* is relevant to the concerns of "A"-15 is beyond doubt, particularly given the prominence of grieving women in the context of historical violence in the movement. But this remains strictly private in terms of the expectations of the reading. What I have tried to suggest is that we do not need to resort to the mechanism of allusion to work with the lines themselves and in the larger context of the movement. Zukofsky does seem to be suggesting that something of the pain and fatalism of *Antigone* can be conveyed by the homophonic rendition read within the larger context and concerns of "A"-15. This does not have to do with hearing Greekness, about which we are given no clue, even though one might think an allusion to Greek tragedy would suit Zukofsky's purpose. But allusions, as such, are forms of intellection that for Zukofsky are less convincing conveyors of mutual human experience, however much they feed academic appetites.

While obviously this small sample out of *Antigone* is directly indebted to *Catullus*, it is not typical of Zukofsky's other late homophonic renderings, which usually drop the formal rules that operate in *Catullus*, especially the requirement to account for every syllable of the original text. Instead Zukofsky tends to freely skip around a given foreign text transliterating a line, phrases or words here and there, but rarely consecutive lines, much less a complete passage or poem. Again, homophonic suggestion is invariably mixed with semantic and visual suggestion. Wray has pointed out that there is a range of sonic determination among Zukofsky's homophonic renditions from almost purely aural transcriptions to varying degrees of lexical reference. He suggests that examples of the former are the Welsh versions in *Little*, although I suspect that if he knew Welsh as well as he knows Latin, he might find more lexical meaning than he imagines ("cool rare air" 90). Nevertheless, his claim is generally true simply because for Zukofsky, as for the majority of us, written Welsh is not nearly so evocative, visually or aurally, in terms of cognates, although its visual peculiarity certainly

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[38] Greek text and English translation are from *Sophocles*, vol. 1, trans. F. Storrs, Loeb Classical Library (1912). The transliteration is from *The Perseus Digital Library*, ed. Gregory R. Crane, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper>.

has its fascination.[39] In general renderings from scripts and languages more alien to Zukofsky—such as Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek or Welsh—tend to be more predominately homophonic, except that this can be off-set to a greater or lesser degree by interpolations from the English translation that in all such cases he had at hand. Languages that are more familiar, meaning Romance languages—particularly French and secondarily Latin—will tend to include something closer to conventional translation, which in any case is readily suggested by the frequency of identifiable cognates (actual or imagined), so that as we have seen it is often impossible to decide whether homophonic or etymological suggestion is the primary motivation. In addition, Zukofsky frequently scissors together scattered pieces, such as with the *Antigone* lines, as well as jumps in and out of homophonic composition within the same text, so that resolving the specific motivation of given details becomes quite futile. This irresolvable shifting of technique is integral to the intent of the poems, particularly as culminating in "A"-22 & -23, which adamantly refuse to reveal what is meant, that is, their motivation. The manner of composition and the reading demanded require an intimately close handling—eyeing and earing—of the details of the material text, which is certainly never a form of pure sensibility, since sight and hearing (indeed sensibility) are thoroughly socialized and never more so then when engaged in that highly social activity of reading.

Given these observations, offering a typical late example of composition by homophonic suggestion is problematic, but I will give a quick specimen from Hebrew in "A"-23. The following is worked from Joel 2:

> […] chimeras' horses
> marry: a whole tear glee
> would seem rain lashes dam—
> young years weave old looms. ("A"-23.544-545)

chimeras' horses / marry:

כמראה סוסים מראהו וכפרשים כן ירוצון:

kemare susim marehu ukhefarashim ken yerutsun:

"The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so do they run." (Joel 2:4)

a whole tear glee / would seem rain lashes dam—

הגדיל יהוה לעשות:-תיראי אדמה גילי ושמחי כי-אל

al-tiri adama gili usemakhi ki-higdil adonai la-ashoot:

"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord hath done great things." (Joel 2:21)

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[39] These Welsh renditions in *Little* are the major instance in which Zukofsky continues to adhere closely to the *Catullus* procedure both in terms of accounting for all syllables and translating complete poems or significant passages. The only critical discussion of them by Seán Golden situates them within the narrative of the novel through the recuperation of their original semantic sense, or at least their translations as found in Zukofsky's source, but this requires going outside the novel. However, Golden also points out that in medieval Welsh poetry intricate sound patterns often took precedence over semantic sense. See "'Whose morsel of lips will you bite?' Some Reflections on the Role of Prosody and Genre as Non-Verbal Elements in the Translation of Poetry" in *Nonverbal Communication and Translation*, ed. Fernando Poyatos (1997): 234-242.

Young years weave old looms.

בשר ונבאו בניכם ובנתיכם זקניכם חלמות יחלמון בחוריכם חזינות -כל-רוחי על-כן אשפוך את-והיה אחרי יראו:

vehaya akharei-khen eshpokh et-rukhi al-kol-basar venibu beneikhem uvenoteikhem zikneikhem <u>khalomot yakhalomun</u> *bakhureikhem khezyonot* <u>yiru</u>*:*

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men <u>shall dream dreams</u>, your young men shall see visions." (Joel 2:28; Hebrew Bible 3:1)[40]

The reader is invited to look over this information closely, and I will not attempt an exhausting discussion. I have underlined what seem to me the details that Zukofsky is working with both homophonically and semantically. One notices how loose the homophonic renderings tend to be, which one might account for by the relative alienness of Hebrew, but is generally typical of these late renderings. One can hear Zukofsky orally massaging the original text to discover glimpses of English possibilities. The second line is a good example of a common practice where the poet appears to pick out homophonically suggested words which are then reordering in his rendition—so here "tear," "glee" and "dam" appear to arise from the segment "*al-tiri adama gili*" and are then redistributed, although it is possible the "dam" is suggested as much by the hard rain imagery he has come up with. Also there are possible visual readings mixed in, such as "lash" from "la-ashoot"; however, the above transcriptions are not those Zukofsky made in his notebooks, which would need to be consulted to pursue this angle. The primary images of Zukofsky's first line—chimera (appearance) and horses—are clearly suggested by the semantic translation, but the second and third lines appear to entirely ignore the original sense. Actually, aside from being colored by Joel's generally apocalyptic manner, what Zukofsky has done is import rain imagery from nearby Joel 2:23: "for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down to you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month."[41] The fourth line appears primarily simply a reworking of the English sense, except that "looms" is suggested by the two key transliterated Hebrew words I have underline which translate as "shall dream dreams." Besides evoking a useful pun (doom), "looms" in turn suggests weaving, which not surprisingly is found ubiquitously in Zukofsky, as of course are horses. These lines, as well as the next three also worked from Joel, seem to suggest images of mortality or time, but any neat paraphrase is self-defeating. If in the first instance the sounding of the lines does not strike the ear as interesting and suggestive, then probably the verse fails. The fourth line above is a good example of the more euphonious instances one encounters, and its proverbial look crops up quite often in "A"-22 & -23. It is not difficult to generate proverbial paraphrases of this line, but the difficulty is feeling we can settle on a definitive one. Above all this small example indicates how composition by homophonic suggestion has simply become integral to Zukofsky's general and quite free-wheeling writing practice—sometimes used as a starting point that can then be freely improvised with any number of other techniques and at others always an available option to add in.

The proposal that sound is the point where any language might intersect with any other gestures at a dimension of universality that is often enough claimed for music. This of course is not literally true as any of us can easily name examples of what goes under the designation of music that we find execrable, or, more to the point, there are musics of other

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[40] The Hebrew transliterations are adapted from Serve-A-Verse: Hebrew Bible, <http://www.levsoftware.com/SAV/> and the translations are those of the standard KJV.

[41] This is indicated in Zukofsky's notebooks (HRC 37.4).

cultures we cannot hear—for example, to most Western ears Chinese Opera or għana (pronounced *aana*), a form of folk singing in Malta where I currently happen to live, are gratingly estranging. Yet, given some open-earedness, we at least can feel and hear that such songs are moving and euphonious to those atuned to them and therefore that we too could acquire such ears. It is easier to believe that we could learn to enjoy all musics than that we could ever learn all languages. This is merely to suggest that Zukofsky's persistent and ever more radical emphasis on the soundscape of his poetry gestures at, without ever pretending to reach or realize outside the moment of writing or reading, some utopian realm, not so much of inter-communication as of inter-connection, of being in the world together that is implied in any language. What do we hear when we listen to a foreign language we do not understand? A surprising amount, actually.

This suggests that *Catullus* and its affect on Zukofsky's later work are best understood not as translation but as a means of opening up his poetic language to the multi-dimensional hauntings that normally remain latent and dormant. This seems to me a plausible way to understand Zukofsky's extensive use of homophonic transmutation in, say, "A"-23, which programmatically works in 6000 years of literary (primarily poetic) materials in chronological order. With some familiarity, the reader can roughly identify what is and is not rendered homophonically—granting that there is a high degree of mixing throughout—as the former tends to be a step more extreme in terms of syntactic *liberté* and the vocabulary is often more peculiar. The homophonic renderings persistently remind or deflect the reader toward the sonic dimension—proposing that we may get more out of the text if we sound it out rather than try puzzling it out semantically, although obviously the latter is never simply cancelled out. The text of "A"-23, which is pieced together from literally hundreds of other texts from across literate history that have been transmutated in various ways, appears intent on listening for the latent possibilities humming in the world of texts. However, it is hardly plausible to think that Zukofsky believed his homophonic renderings in "A"-23 somehow meaningfully brought over the voice of, say, Greek, Latin or Biblical Hebrew—all dead languages in any case. By this time his practice is far too anarchic and is little concerned with any sustained adhering to the "sound" of the original texts. We could say that a poem like "A"-23 deliberately sites itself among the world's languages, acknowledging the foreign that we conventionally have to keep out in order to "make sense," even though we know perfectly well the foreign inhabits every nook and cranny of "our" language. It is easier to acknowledge this from the abstract safety of theory than to open the pandora's box that is our own tongue.

20 Oct. 2014