

Embodied Translation Practice in Brandon Brown's *odi et amo*

American West-coast poet Brandon Brown retranslates Catullus' famous *odi et amo* epigram in a way that highlights the possibilities for Brown's own autobiographical expression. In close readings of Brown's version of *carmen* 85, I illustrate how Brown ingeniously pays tribute to Catullus's original by enlisting repetition and amplification using a composition technique that resembles the contrapuntal fugue technique made famous by Johann Sebastian Bach in Baroque music. In addition to creating a sophisticated and stylized soundscape, Brown amplifies the formal and rhetorical features of *carmen* 85, while schooling the reader in *odi et amo*'s reception history. Finally, Brown modulates the topic of Catullus's poem from "Lesbia" (Catullus's beloved) to "translation" in a self-referential gesture. The reader has the sense that Brown would prefer not merely to retranslate Catullus but to *become* Catullus, *incorporate* and embody him.

Dryden prescribed that translations should bear specific, local distinctions such that Vergil adopt the sounds and sensibilities of an English gentleman: "I may presume to say . . . I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age." How close does Brown come to Dryden's position in making Catullus speak as if the Roman poet were living in Oakland, California in the 21st century? In his formal interventions, what is gained by augmenting the original's elegiac couplet by exponential proportions? How is repetition in this sense different from the kind of inane repetition in Classical retranslations that quote old versions verbatim? This paper aims to answer these questions with an eye to Brown's poetics and his careful crafting of his own *persona*.

Bibliography

Brown, Brandon. *The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus*. Krupskaya: 2011.

Vergil. *Aeneid*, trans. John Dryden. New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1909.