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Departure: Vertrek

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Departure: Vertrek



Universiteit Leiden

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Rede uitgesproken door

prof.dr. Joan Booth

ter gelegenheid van haar afscheid als hoogleraar

Latijnse Taal- en Letterkunde

aan de Universiteit Leiden

op maandag 12 september 2011



Universiteit Leiden

*Mijnheer de decaan, distinguished guests, zeer gewaardeerde
toehoorders,*

Am I coming or going? Now, there is a question I have found myself asking a good many times during the past decade - and never in expectation of serious answer. But as I have drawn closer to the moment of *opstappen*, 'stepping down' (or, as the literal Dutch has it, 'stepping up'), from my office and also to the moment of my leaving this country, I have begun to see something more in that question than a rhetorical *cri de coeur*.¹ I have begun to see its relevance to 'departure', *vertrek*. 'But that surely has nothing to do with "coming"?'; you may say; 'That is quite clearly "going" - or, at any rate, we hope so!' Fear not: *neque me sententia uertit*.² No more than Virgil's Jupiter have I 'changed my mind'. I have simply begun to realise what ambiguities and complexities surround the concept of leaving, in both our fast, modern world and the slower, distant one of Greek and Roman antiquity. These I would like to explore a little in my lecture. I shall focus predominantly - and predictably - on a few classical Latin poems, but I begin with a Greek visual medium.

Thanks to several articles by Geralda Jurriaans of the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam,³ I have become aware of a fascinating problem involving two sixth-century BC Greek vase-paintings that depict the goddess Athena in an identical attitude: that is, holding the reins of a chariot in her hands, and with one foot on the chariot, the other on the ground. The hero Heracles is also there in both paintings, in one of them seated in the chariot, and in the other standing beside it, looking back at Athena. First assumption may well be that Athena in both depictions is mounting the chariot to drive Heracles to Olympus after his apotheosis. But in that case, why, in one of the paintings, is Heracles *out* of the chariot looking back at her? The answer is almost certainly that in that painting, they are not about to *depart* to Olympus: they have *arrived*. And Athena is not mounting the chariot, but

stepping down from it after delivering Heracles safely to their destination: *ze stapt niet op, maar stapt af*. Or perhaps you might say that both paintings show her *aan het opstappen* in two different senses: in the one, 'stepping in' (as on to a train about to depart), and in the other, 'stepping down', because her job is done. At all events, the same physical attitude can suggest *both* 'coming' *and* 'going'. Context and perspective are crucial.

In our modern world it is the context of mass travel, especially by rail and air, that sees some of the most familiar deployments of the words 'departure' and *vertrek*. Within this setting they are semi-technical terms. 'Departure' is the move that leaves the starting-place of a journey behind. It is also a moment: the scheduled moment at which a journey by the designated means of transport begins (if you are *very* lucky, it could even be the actual moment!). And then again, especially in the context of modern air travel, it is a process too - one which involves a protracted series of preparatory steps before the truly definitive moment of take-off is reached. If there is one thing that my ten years' experience of being a Flying Dutchwoman has taught me, it is that however far advanced you may become in the *process* of departure, you should never assume you are 'going' until the aircraft has left the ground. Not until that precise second will the system count you as *vertrokken*, 'departed'; and, almost simultaneously, another system will be classifying you as an 'arrival' - even though you are nowhere near having arrived. 'Departure' in this semi-technical context, may indeed obviously be 'going', but point of view paradoxically makes it also a part of 'coming'. The idea of a journey's beginning predominates, but a hint of its ending is also there.

'Departure' in this logistic context is carefully presented as an emotionally neutral event. But in a broader context the notion of *severance* associated with the event of 'departure' imbues it with emotion: at best, mixed emotion - happy anticipation of what is to come, tinged with sadness about what is being left behind - and at worst, a deep sense of loss of all that is dear:

Departure from this happy place, our sweet
Recess, and only consolation left
Familiar to our eyes.⁴

So does Milton's Adam view his banishment from Paradise announced by the Archangel Michael. English 'departure' derives ultimately from classical Latin *dispertire*, a transitive verb meaning 'to separate', while in Dutch - and German - clear etymological underpinning of the notion of severance associated with *vertrek* comes from a different word that is almost invariably linked with the event: *afscheid*, *Abschied*. In this broader context the sense of ending has a tendency to predominate, though a hint of beginning is not necessarily excluded.

With those reflections on 'departure' in familiar settings, I now turn back to the ancient world and to the first of four poetic faces of *vertrek* that I shall consider.

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1. Arrival before departure: Catullus 46 and 31

Iam uer egelidos refert tepores...
Now spring brings back unfrozen warmth,
Now the sky's equinoctial fury
Is hushed by Zephyr's welcome airs.
linquantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi...
Take leave of Phrygian plains, Catullus,
And sweltering Nicaea's lush fields.
Let's fly to Asia's famous cities.
iam mens praetrepidans auet uagari,
iam laeti studio pedes uigescunt.
Excited thoughts now long to travel;
Glad feet now tap in expectation.
o dulces comitum ualete coetus...
Farewell, sweet company of comrades,
Who leaving distant homes together
return by different routes apart.

Yes, this is Catullus, writing in the mid-first century BC, apparently on the point of leaving the province of Bithynia at the end of a period of service on the staff of the Roman governor, Memmius. Despite urging 'flying' (*uolemus*, line 6), he is clearly not at the Bithynian Siphophol. All the same, like a departing air traveller, he *is* strongly focussed on 'going', and his impatience to get on with it is unmistakable in the very sound of the original Latin verses that I interwove with the superb English translation of my late mentor and friend, Guy Lee.⁵ Fair enough: the place Catullus is leaving is stinking hot, and he has a three-star cultural tour ahead of him. Yet the joyous anticipation is tempered by *afscheid*: he has to part from the 'sweet company of comrades', who 'set out together', but are returning 'by different routes, apart' (*gescheiden*). Those closing lines also reveal that this departure poem concerns only the return leg of a round-trip: the original departure was 'from home' (*domo*, line 10), and the journey now in sight is to bring the travellers back; 'Asia's famous cities' are to be only a stopover. Catullus leaves us wondering, though, whether this 'departure' ever became 'arrival'? Actually, he does not. Readers who have reached this poem (46), after starting at the beginning of his *oeuvre*, will have passed poem 31 on the way, which presents him, travel-weary, saluting his home at Sirmio on Lake Garda in northern Italy. Here is an extract in Lee's version again (very slightly adapted):

How pleased, how happy I am to see you again,
Hardly convinced that **I have left Thynia**
And the Bithynian plains and found you safe.
O what more blissful than to have no worries,
When the mind lays down the load, and tired of foreign
Service we have come to our own hearth
And rest content upon the longed-for bed!

Ah, yes: indeed! The close verbal anticipation of the departure poem's *linquantur Phrygii ... campi* in this arrival poem's *Thyni(am) atque Bithynos / liquisse campos* (lines 5-6) leaves - at least in hindsight - little doubt that it is the same journey

that in the first-encountered of the two poems is already being viewed from the other end (*uenimus*, ‘we have come to our own hearth’, line 9). So, if the order in which Catullus’ poems have reached us is his own order (and there are good reasons to believe that it is, though the matter is controversial⁶), we encounter something that is unthinkable in the world of modern travel: ‘arrival’ announced before ‘departure’ has been confirmed. In life ‘forward echo’ is a virtually impossible concept: in classical Latin poetry it is not. And there we have a reminder that, although the ancient medium may be reassuringly linked with our own world and experience by common human emotion, it does not necessarily operate according to the same logic.

2. Dissembled departure: Regulus in Horace, *Odes* 3.5.49-56.

I now move from poetic ‘arrival before departure’ to departure that is not - yet *is*: ‘dissembled departure’ it could perhaps be called. For this I turn to Horace, writing about twenty years later than Catullus in the principate of Augustus. This was, as many of you well know, a period when moral revival - a return to traditional standards and values - became associated with a political programme to stabilise and rebuild the self-image of a nation shattered by a series of civil wars, the latest of which had brought to power in 31 BC Caesar Octavian (Augustus). In the fifth ode of his third book, Horace, apparently without reserve, supports Augustan imperial expansion and commends the traditionalist moral line. He condemns those Roman soldiers who, after their capture by the Parthians in 53 BC, made the best of a bad job and settled down with Parthian wives. As a corrective example, he tells the story of the Roman general Regulus, captured by the Carthaginians in the first Punic War. According to legend, Regulus, after five years in captivity, was despatched to Rome on parole to negotiate a deal with the Roman senate that would lead to an exchange of prisoners. But in the event he persuaded the senate to refuse a deal, and, true to his word, returned to Carthage - and to certain death. Like Catullus’ journey, his was a round-trip, but,

poignantly, it did not start from home or finish there. Horace closes his account (and his poem) as follows (this time I read from the Dutch translation of Professor Piet Schrijvers,⁷ whom I had the privilege of succeeding in the Leiden chair of Latin):

Maar hij besefte wat een barbaarse beul
hem zou bereiden. Toch schoof hij op zijn weg
de menigte en zijn familie uiteen,
die hem de terugkeer wilde beletten,

alsof hij na een lange cliëntenzaak,
na een beslissing over een rechtsgeschil
zijn landgoed opzocht in Venafrum
of naar Spartaans Tarente reisde.

So (I cannot resist quoting here Rudyard Kipling’s happily imperialist schoolmaster, Mr King, whose very name suggests that he rather fancied *himself* as a Regulus), ‘cutting his own throat with every word he uttered’,⁸ he pushed aside family and friends trying to stop him going, just as if, after finally wrapping up a tedious court-case, he was ‘making for’ (*tendens* in Latin) his holiday place in the country or a nice spot by the sea.

Nisbet and Rudd in their commentary aptly quote the English historian Macaulay’s imaginative description of William III *van Oranje* threatening, after initially being offered the English crown in 1688, to return to Holland immediately if he were made only regent (and not king) of England with his wife Mary.⁹ Macaulay writes: ‘But the iron stoicism of William never gave way; he stood among his weeping friends calm and austere, as if he had been about to leave them only for a short visit to his hunting grounds at Loo’. In opting for ‘leave them’ rather than ‘depart’, as you might perhaps have expected, in view of its potentially more emotive connotations, Macaulay shows not only that he remembers Horace’s Regulus but also that he well grasps the significance of *tendens*. Through this choice of word, Horace alters the point of view of what

Regulus is doing from that of the distraught bystanders to that of Regulus himself. *They* see it as involving the most final and grievous kind of severance: *he*, by his demeanour, denies his action the emotive status of ‘departure’ altogether, reducing it to mere ‘setting off’. Kipling and Macaulay clearly approved of Regulus being ‘in denial’, as it is called these days: whether in the end Horace did, and whether we should, are good questions!

3. Aborted departure: the elegiac *propemptika*

I stay with the perspective of ‘the left’ rather than ‘the leaving’ for my third type of poetic *vertrek*. There are things that even now you conventionally say to people departing: ‘safe journey’; *vlieg veilig*; ‘all the best’; *tot gauw*; and so on. It varies a little according to the form of transport, the nature of the relationship between the parties, and whether or not the traveller may be expected to return. But the formulae are short, the tone restrained, and a full-blown speech not usual - except possibly as part of the ritual of *afscheid*! Not so in classical antiquity, as again some of you will be well aware. A young Roman’s education included making practice speeches on set topics, one of which was ‘send-off’ to a departing traveller. The Greek rhetorician Menander, writing probably in the late third century AD, prescribes the motifs suitable for such a speech, which he calls *propemptikon* (meaning, quite literally, ‘send-off’). These motifs include condemnation of sea-faring, protest (technically termed *schletiasmos*) against the undertaking of the journey, with reminders of its hazards and the anxiety caused to those left at home, expressions of affection for the traveller and prayers for safe arrival. Over three hundred years earlier than this the topic was already popular with the Latin poets, who, possibly under the influence of their own school training, rehearse much the same range of motifs as later prescribed by Menander.¹⁰ I am interested in what was made of it by two Augustan elegiac love-poets: Propertius and Ovid. Propertius, speaking as lover, in poem 8 of his first book addresses his wayward Cynthia,

who is determined to sail for the province of Illyria with a rival. Vehement *schetliasmos* opens the poem (lines 1-4; I use here the English prose translation of Stephen Heyworth,¹¹ whose presence compliments me this afternoon):

Are you mad then, and does my love not hold you back?
Or am I of less value to you than chilly Illyria? And does
this man of yours, whoever he is, now mean so much to
you that you are willing to head off on *any* [my italics]
wind without me?

Then, after due reminders of how horrible the voyage and subsequent journey over land will be, the lover wishes that some cosmic disruption - something worse than a volcanic ash cloud - could occur to prevent this *vertrek*:

Oh, would that the period of winter storms might be
doubled in length, and the sailor remain inactive because
the Pleiades are slow to rise (9-10).

But suddenly a complete change of attitude. The gist is clear, but the Latin text is in some disarray, and so I paraphrase rather than attempt to translate: ‘All the same, may the sea-nymph Galatea favour you. I cannot wish you anything but a safe journey, and whatever remote shores I hear you have reached, I shall always regard you as mine’. So does Propertius manage to focus on the ‘arrival’ end of the event of departure, turning the painful ‘going’ into an almost acceptable kind of ‘coming’. But he has not finished. Whether it is the beginning of a completely separate poem or a continuation of the original one (the matter is much debated¹²), what immediately follows (lines 27-30) is equally striking in its impact:

Hic erit! hic iurata manet! rumpantur iniqui!
uicimus: assiduas non tulit illa preces.
falsa licet cupidus deponat gaudia liuor:
destitit ire nouas Cynthia nostra uias.

Here she will be! Here she has sworn to stay! My enemies can go and burst! I have won: she could not hold out against my constant pleading. Greedy envy can lay aside its false delight: my Cynthia has given up the venturing of new routes.¹³

So, in his first ‘scene’ Propertius has converted the conventional *propemptikon* into a love-poem, and in his second has demonstrated its ‘practical usefulness’.¹⁴ It has achieved what even cosmic disruption could not guarantee: cancellation of departure altogether.

Propertius, however, is outdone by Ovid. In Book 2 of his *Amores*, poem 11, he too produces an elegiac love-*propemptikon*. He begins with a highly wrought and melodramatic cursing of the inventors of ships and sea-faring which culminates in the comically bathetic announcement that his beloved Corinna is planning a ‘treacherous’ trip (*fallacisque uias ire Corinna parat*, line 8); there must surely be a glimmer of hope immediately if the trip is only at the ‘planning’ stage. Flamboyantly witty warnings and *schetliasmos* follow, until, two-thirds of the way through the poem (line 34), with ‘May Galatea favour your vessel all the same’, it looks as if Ovid is going down exactly the same route as Propertius. And it still looks that way three lines later (37), with *uade memor nostri*, ‘Go, remembering me ...’; but then comes the trump: *uento reditura secundo*, ‘destined to **return** with a favouring wind’. Not just in mid-poem, but in mid-*line*, a literal turnaround. Isn’t the Latin future active participle a wonderful thing? We have nothing like it in either English or Dutch. With that single economical word *reditura* the Ovidian lover transforms ‘going’, not just into ‘coming’, but into ‘coming *back*’ - treacherous departure into a round-trip with (in his imagination, at least) a joyful lovers’ reunion at the end of it: he spends the rest of the poem fantasising about the welcome he will give Corinna when her ship comes home. Ovid does not openly say what was the effect of his version of the *propemptikon*, but if we can judge from the opening of his next poem, which has no explicit

setting, the implication is that it too must be supposed to have aborted the planned *vertrek*:

Encircle my temples, triumphal laurel;
I have won (*uicimus*): Corinna is in my embrace.¹⁵

So, then, it is not so much departure as ‘nearly departure’, *aborted* departure, that features in these two love-*propemptika*. A nice reminder that you are indeed not *vertrokken* until you have actually ‘taken off’!

4. Departure without return: displacement, exile and emigration (Virgil, *Eclogue* 1; Ovid, *Tristia* 1.3; Juvenal, *Satire* 3).

I now come my fourth and last variety of *vertrek* in classical Latin poetry: the departure that is to all intents final, the one-way trip with either no realistic prospect of return or no wish to consider it. My examples deal with displacement, exile and emigration.

(i) I begin with the first *Eclogue* of Virgil, composed around 40 BC. This is a stylised conversation between two countrymen, the one, Meliboeus, apparently a citizen, evicted from his Italian farm, and the other, Tityrus, apparently a slave, permitted to continue the rustic existence he finds so agreeable. Richard Jenkyns in a sensitive article of 1989¹⁶ labelled the world of Virgil’s *Eclogues* ‘riddling’, ‘fluctuating’ and ‘elusive’, and there is indeed much in this poem that will not fit one coherent scenario. Even so, talk of dispossession at this time cannot fail to evoke real events of the late 40s BC. After Caesar Octavian’s victory in 43 over the assassins of Julius Caesar the Dictator, his veterans were rewarded with plots of land requisitioned from Italian countrymen (events in the Balkans in the 1990s and more recently in Zimbabwe may well come to mind). Meliboeus opens the poem as follows (lines 1-4):

Tityrus, jij ligt lui, met een weidse beuk als beschutting,
 't landelijk fluitrepertoire op de schamele halm door te nemen;
 wij, op de vlucht uit ons land, verlaten de dierbare dreven,
 wij zijn verbannen van huis.
nos patriae finis et dulciora linquimus arua.
nos patriam fugimus.

The last line of R.F.M. Brouwer's Dutch translation¹⁷ that I read there is a little free, but it conveys the essence well. The impact of *linquimus* could hardly be more different from what it was in that very first poem of Catullus that I discussed. The destination for which Catullus was so eagerly setting off when he quit the plains of Bithynia is precisely what Meliboeus is leaving against his will: his home (*patriam*). 'Aagh, shall I ever, after a long time, some day' (*longo post tempore, post aliquot*, lines 67 and 69), he asks, 'admire the sight of my modest home territory, my cottage and the growing corn?'. The realistic answer is 'no'. This departure is final. When we see him, he is in the most ghastly kind of transit: already 'departed', but with nowhere to 'go': the overnight lodging that the almost comically insensitive Tityrus offers him at the end is but a temporary refuge from homelessness. True, Meliboeus names some possible destinations for people like himself, but they are surely symbolic rather than real: all remote and unpleasant, located at the extremities of the four points of the compass, south, north, east and west respectively:

But some of us [i.e. unlike you, Tityrus, who have the luck to stay where you are], will go (*ibimus*) to the thirsting Libyans, others will come (*ueniemus* ['going' and 'coming' are not differentiated]) to Scythia and the fast-flowing Oaxes¹⁸, and to the Britons drastically cut off from the whole world (*penitus toto diuissos orbe Britannos*).

What could possibly be worse?

(ii) Well, one thing, perhaps, if you were not a countryman but *Stadtmensch* through and through, and if the home that

you were being forced to leave was the sophisticated metropolis at the centre of the civilised world. This is how Ovid depicts himself at the time of allegedly being exiled from Rome by Augustus in AD 8 to Tomi, a remote outpost of the Empire on the Black Sea, as a punishment for writing immoral poetry and knowing too much about some kind of scandal involving the imperial family. I say 'allegedly' because some scholars do not believe a word of it, contending that the exile was pure invention.¹⁹ Invention or not, it gave Ovid something new to write poetry about, including, in the third poem of the first book of his *Tristia*, his 'departure' from Rome:

Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago ...
 When the most grievous picture comes to me of that night
 that was my last time in the City,
 when I recall the night on which I left behind so much dear to me,
labitur ex oculis nunc quoque gutta meis
 even now a tear falls from my eyes.
 (lines 1-4)

Yes, and the poem is a tear-*jerker* too, as Ovid relives in vivid detail the emotions and events leading up to the moment of his last exit from his own house. He describes the domestic scene as comparable with the final hours of Troy, in all respects like a funeral, with a tearful household and friends gathered around to see the carrying out of the deceased (you could, of course, say 'the departed'). Ovid recounts his endless ploys to delay the definitive moment of *vertrek* and his devoted wife's distraught and fruitless begging to be allowed to go with him. Ultimately he says (lines 89-90), 'looking the image of a corpse being carried to his funeral, I do depart' (*egredior*): a stunningly effective use of the vivid present (a device, in my opinion, much overused in modern writing).

Strong stuff? Indeed; but also a picture neatly contrived to preserve and enhance Ovid's personal stature and poetic reputation in the place to which he is forbidden to return. The contrivance is effected by manipulation of some of the

time-frames and perspectives on ‘departure’ that we have already encountered. He shows us a stage less advanced in the process of *vertrek* than that at which we saw the displaced Meliboeus: *pre*-departure - Ovid has not yet even stepped outside his house. But, then again, he *has*. In real time he is *looking back from* his place of exile at the *prospect of departing towards* it. What this means is that, as he writes, that near-corpse is still alive: although physically departed from Rome, he is at the same time *not* ‘departed’ from life or from literary activity, even in the disagreeably remote destination he has evidently now reached. Through his poetic account of his protracted *vertrek*, he has also almost managed to give himself the pleasure that I think some of us would secretly like: that of being present at his own funeral to see everyone gratifyingly upset. And through his own construction of not only the perspective but also the very words of those being left behind, he can have his wife say what he what he would like to hear. Mrs Ovid in fact sounds exactly like her witty husband himself when she says: ‘as wife of an exile an exile I’ll be’ (*coniunx exulis exul ero*, line 82) and ‘Caesar’s anger bids *you* to depart from home, *me*, my duty; my duty will be Caesar for me’ (*te iubet e patria discedere Caesaris ira, / me pietas: pietas haec mihi Caesar erit*, line 85-6). And Ovid at the last finds a poet’s way of having her do what he would like her to have done. ‘The story is told’ (*narratur*, line 91), he says, ‘that after I had departed, she rolled on the ground in her distress, weeping, groaning and dishevelled’. ‘The story is told’: by whom? ‘By Homer and Virgil’, you may well say, because this sounds just like a bereaved Iliadic Andromache or Hecuba or the mother of Trojan Euryalus in the *Aeneid*,²⁰ and Ovid’s *narratur* is a coded way of showing that he knows it. Yet within the poem, ‘the story is told’ only by Ovid himself: he had total control over how his wife would be seen to have reacted to the loss of him, even though he had not been there to witness it in person.

(iii) So much for two very different angles in classical Latin poetry on enforced departure with no prospect of return. My last, brief, example is one of voluntary, but (as it is envisaged) permanent, relocation. The first twenty lines of the third of *Satire* of Juvenal, written roughly a century after Ovid (between AD 110 and 120), present the first-person narrator’s introduction of the character who will speak for the rest of the poem. This is one Umbricius, who has decided to pack up city-life in Rome and move out to the country near Cumae, the gateway to the seaside resort of Baiae and ‘an agreeable coast offering a pleasant retreat’ (*gratum litus amoeni secessus*; lines 4-5). Juvenal says that he is upset by his old friend’s departure (the etymology of *digressus*, the Latin word used here, suggests a literal ‘divergence of tracks’). But he understands the reason for it: living conditions and moral standards in Rome have deteriorated to the point where the only sensible thing to do is to get out. He shows us Umbricius at a stage in the process of departure *between* Ovid’s final exit from his home and Meliboeus’ transit limbo - the stage where the *verhuizers* are at the door. It is ‘while his entire household is being loaded on to a single waggon’ (*dum tota domus raeda componitur una*) that Umbricius delivers an unrelenting rant against the conditions that he claims have driven him out. One feels it must have been rather a large waggon, because the loading of it apparently allows him to go on for 300 lines. Only the driver getting impatient stops him in the end (lines 315-6): ‘I could add plenty of other reasons to these, but the yoked beasts are calling, and the sun is going down. I have to go’ (*eundum est*).

The departing Umbricius is a disturbing character. It is difficult to sympathise with him at the last (and surely not insignificant that the initially sympathetic narrator remains silent). Difficult, because of the jaundiced bigotry with which Umbricius makes his case. The unmistakably bucolic ring of the language he uses at the ultimate moment of *vertrek* (the restless animals, the setting sun) suggests that he considers himself destined for the tranquillity of a rustic world; and yet you suspect that he is deluding himself. For one as bitter and cynical as he is, what it

has to offer may, for different reasons, prove just as unending as it did for Meliboeus. *Vertrek* for Umbricius is less of an event than an unattainable ideal; what he is trying to leave behind is inside his own head. And in unilaterally ruling out the possibility of return, even for a visit - he is willing see Juvenal again only outside the city - he unwittingly makes *himself* the loser.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, I hope that my exploration (admittedly, but necessarily, selective) may have demonstrated that 'departure', *vertrek*, in classical Latin poetry is no more monodimensional or monodirectional - no more straightforwardly a matter of 'going' - than, on scrutiny, it is in modern life. There is a sense, I suggest, in which 'coming' and 'going' are not separate actions, but part of a eternal continuum that I think perhaps the Psalmist understood in writing (I quote the Hebrew-based version of the Latin Vulgate) *Dominus custodiet introitum tuum et exitum tuum, ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum* (*Psalm* 121, v. 8), in the 1611 English version, 'The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore', and in the Dutch version of 1637, *De HEERE sal uwen uytganck ende uwen inganck bewaren, van nu aen tot in der eeuwicheyt*. This may well have been inspired by the daily going into and coming out of the fields that was the unceasing rhythm of life in an ancient agricultural society.²¹ But for me, moving as frequently as I have during the last decade between two homes, two countries and two cultures, it is suggestive of the perpetual round-trip that life has become and will, I hope, in some degree continue to be, with the starting-point of the round-trip somewhat shifting and elusive according to point of view, and the coming and going scarcely distinguishable one from the other.

Epilogue

This is an appropriate point to express my thanks to those who have made it possible. To my immediate professorial colleagues at various times, Ineke Sluiter, Karl Enenkel and Manfred Horstmanshoff, and to all the other academic staff of the Classics Department with whom I have worked closely, especially Latinist Christoph Pieper. To my colleagues in the wider Faculty and the Faculteitsbestuur (in its several different incarnations since 2002). To my friends, within and outside Nederland, who have supported and sustained me with unstinting generosity. To my current and former PhD students, Mark Heerink, Michael Husbands and Bettina Reitz, who have honoured me with today's symposium and hold a special place in my regard. *En*, last but not least, *aan al de getalenteerde studenten, die mij zo veel hebben geleerd (echt!): van harte bedankt*. I warmly welcome my successor, Antje Wessels, and wish her every satisfaction in the position that I now leave.

As I come to a close, I cannot resist pondering on which, if any, of those departing figures in the classical world I resemble. Catullus? Hardly; I have not yet either 'gone' or 'come' - and the Leiden I am leaving behind is, on the whole, anything but stinking hot. Regulus? I don't think so. I came here ten years ago to negotiate not exchange of prisoners but exchange of ideas; and, as far as I know, I am not returning to captivity. Propertius' Cynthia and Ovid's Corinna? No: I am not expecting any *schetliasmos*, and I cannot change my mind. Meliboeus? Well, I am indeed departing to the Britons, but Britons no longer 'cut off from the rest of the world': we now have a tunnel. The exiled Ovid? I see no one rolling on the floor in grief, and I cannot control the words of any person who may just possibly speak within the next few minutes. Umbricius? Worryingly close: I *am*, after all, departing for a quiet cottage by the sea on a distant west coast... But then, it is with every intention of return rather than a sour determination never to set foot in the place again. Nor would a single waggon - even a big one - be enough for

me: the books alone will require several. I would like to think that I am perhaps most like Athena in the vase-paintings in her ambiguous posture of *both coming and going: aan het opstappen*, both because I must depart, and because I have, in a sense, already arrived: the job is done.

But for my feelings, I think I must let poetry itself speak again, this time Ludwig Rellstab's German poem *Abschied*, which is best known as the text of one of Franz Schubert's *Lieder*. And since my feelings on departure are at the positive, 'mixed', end of the spectrum, I take the liberty of editing out the verses of unrelieved gloom (just as we all have to edit our lives a little in order to survive):

Ade! du muntre, du fröhliche Stadt, ade!
Schon scharret mein Rößlein mit lustigen Fuß;
Jetzt nimm noch den letzten, den scheidenden Gruß.
Du hast mich wohl niemals noch traurig gesehn,
So kann es auch jetzt nicht beim Abschied geschehn.

Ade, ihr Bäume, ihr Gärten so grün, ade!
Nun reit ich am silbernen Strome entlang.
Weit schallend ertönet mein Abschiedsgesang;
Nie habt ihr ein trauriges Lied gehört,
So wird euch auch keines beim Scheiden beschert!

Ade! du schimmerndes Fensterlein hell, ade!
Du glänzest so traulich mit dämmerndem Schein
Und ladest so freundlich ins Hüttchen uns ein.
Vorüber, ach, ritt ich so manches Mal,
Und wär es denn heute zum letzten Mal?

Nein! Of course not. *Zeker niet*. But the chariot is waiting. *Ik heb gezegd*.

Notes

- 1 Not to know whether one is coming or going is a twentieth-century English idiom for being in a state of mental confusion due to daunting workload, general stress or emotional upheaval.
- 2 Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.260: Jupiter's reassurance to his daughter, Venus, that the ultimate destiny of her son, Aeneas, remains unchanged.
- 3 G. Jurriaans-Helle, 'Het ontleden van Griekse vaasschilderingen', *Lampas* 30 (1997), 285-96; 'The bride, the goddess, the hero and the warrior. Chariot-scenes on Attic black-figure vases' in: R.F. Docter and E.M. Moormann (eds), *Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Amsterdam, July 12-17, 1998. Classical Archaeology towards the Third Millennium: Reflections and Perspectives* (Allard Pierson Series, Amsterdam 1999), 206-8; 'B(e)rijder staapt op', *Proposis. Mededelingenblad Allard Pierson Museum Amsterdam* 91-2 (2006), 17-19.
- 4 John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 11, 303-5.
- 5 G. Lee, *The Poems of Catullus*, OUP, Oxford 1991.
- 6 See e.g. M.A.J. Heerink, 'Misconceptions about the Art of Ancient Publishing: Catullus' Book of Poetry Reconsidered', *International Journal of the Book* 6.1 (2009), 95-100.
- 7 P.H. Schrijvers, *Horatius: Verzamelde Gedichten*, Historische Uitgeverij, Groningen 2003.
- 8 Kipling's *Regulus*, first published in *A Diversity of Creatures*, Macmillan, London 1917, was a late addition to his *Stalky & Co.* series of short stories.
- 9 R.G.M. Nisbet and N. Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace, Odes Book III* (OUP, Oxford 2003), 96.
- 10 See especially F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh UP, Edinburgh 1972), 159 ff.
- 11 S.J. Heyworth, *Cynthia. A Companion to the Text of Propertius* (OUP, Oxford 2007), 522.
- 12 Discussion and select bibliography in Heyworth (n. 11 above), 37-8.
- 13 My own modification of Heyworth's translation (n. 11 above), 522.
- 14 A variation of the 'Nützlichkeitsstopik' identified by W. Stroh in his seminal study *Die römische Liebeslegie als werbende Dichtung*, Hakkert, Amsterdam 1971.
- 15 Ovid, *Amores* 2.12.1-2, in my own translation (J. Booth [ed.], *Ovid, Amores II* [Warminster 1991], 63).
- 16 R. Jenkyns, 'Virgil and Arcadia', *Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989), 26-39.
- 17 R.F.M. Brouwer, *Vergilius: Bucolica, Herdersgezangen*. Ambo, Baarn 1995.
- 18 Precisely which river is meant is much debated: see W. Clausen (ed.), *Virgil: Eclogues* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994), 56.
- 19 A convenient documentation of the scholarly dissent is by provided J-M. Claassen in her review of R. Verdière, *Le secret du voltigeur d'amour ou la mystère de la relégation d'Ovide* (Brussels 1992): 'Ovid's Exile: Is the Secret Out Yet?', *Scholia* 3 (1994), 107-11.
- 20 Homer, *Iliad* 22.429-36, 466-74; Virgil, *Aeneid* 9.475-502.
- 21 My thanks to Prof. Morna Hooker, Prof. Manfred Horstmanshoff, Dr Joan Greatrex and Dr David Hunt for information and discussion of the Psalm text.

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'Departure', *vertrek*, is at first sight a simple notion: the business of 'going'. On scrutiny, however, the 'going' involved is often scarcely distinguishable from 'coming'. This is equally true of both the modern world of mass travel and the ancient one of Greek and Roman art and literature. The crucial role of context and point of view are explored in this Valedictory Lecture, with focus chiefly on four facets of departure in classical Latin poetry from Catullus to Juvenal exposing the ambiguity and complexity of the concept.



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