

## JUSTINIAN'S WORLD: THE MEDITERRANEAN BEFORE ISLAM

For distribution on February 12

For consideration on February 19

### LITERATURE AND LEARNING

#### POETRY

##### **1.1. Paul the Silentiary [fl. c. 550-c. 570 CE], in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* V.252**

“Let us throw off these cloaks, my pretty one, and lie naked, knotted in each other’s embrace. Let nothing be between us; even that thin slip you wear seems as thick as the wall of Babylon. Let our breasts and our lips be linked. The rest must be veiled in silence; I hate a babbling tongue.”

##### **1.2. Paul the Silentiary, in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* V.255**

“I saw the lovers. In the fury of their passion they glued their lips together in a long kiss. It would be easier to tear apart two vines that for years have grown around each other than separate them as they kissed and knotted their lithe limbs in a close embrace. Three times blessed, my love, are the ones tangled in such chains. Three times blessed! But we must burn far from each other.”

##### **1.3. Paul the Silentiary, in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* V.264**

“Why find fault with hair grown gray so early and eyes wet with tears? These are the pranks that my love for you plays, the marks of unsatisfied desire, the work of many sleepless nights. Yes, my sides are wrinkled before their time, and the skin hangs loose upon my neck. The fresher the flame, the older the body devoured by care. But if you take pity on me and grant me your favor, my body will recover its vigor and my hair its raven tint.”

##### **1.4. Paul the Silentiary, in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* V.258**

“Your wrinkles are preferable to the moist sheen of youth, and I long to clasp in my hands your apples, sagging with their weight, more than I do the firm breasts of a young girl. Your autumn excels another’s spring; your winter is warmer than another’s summer.”

##### **1.5. Agathias [c. 532–c. 580 CE], in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* V.280**

“Are you too in pain? Are you also sick, wasting away with burning eyes? Or do you enjoy sweet sleep, with no thought of my suffering? The same agony shall one day be yours, and I shall see your cheeks drenched with tears. In all else the goddess of Love is malignant, but one virtue is hers—she hates a prude.”

##### **1.6. Agathias [c. 532–c. 580 CE], in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* VI.59**

“Callirrhoe dedicates to Aphrodite her garland, to Athena her tress, and to Artemis her girdle; for she found the husband she wanted, grew up in virtue, and gave birth to boys.”

##### **1.7. Agathias [c. 532–c. 580 CE], in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* VI.32**

“Charicles by the wooded hill offered to Pan who loves the rock this yellow, bearded goat—a horned creature to the horned, a hairy one to the hairy-legged, a bounding one to the deft leaper, a denizen of the woods to the forest god.”

##### **1.8. Theaetetus Scholasticus [6<sup>th</sup> c. CE] in vol. 1 of *Greek Anthology* VI.27**

“Baeto the fisherman, now his hand is heavy with ailing old age, gives to the gods who grant good catches his many-eyed net that caught him many a fish, his pair of rods with their hooks, his float, the faithful indicator of the weels set in the depths, his flint that gives birth to fire when struck, the anchor besides, fetter of the storm, that held his boat fast, and the jaws of his curved hooks that pierce fish.”

### 1.9. Dioscorus of Aphrodito [520-c. 585 CE], "Epithalium for Count Callinicus"

"Bridegroom, may your wedding be filled with the dancing of the Graces; may it ever seek the help of Wisdom after Beauty. You are marrying a bride who is an enviable Ariadne, silver-sandaled Theophile wreathed in gold. (May your marriage) have the scent at once of love and of wisdom. Gold has embraced gold, and silver has found silver. You raise up the honey-sweet grape cluster, in its bloom of youth; Dionysus attends the summer of your wedding, bearing wine, love's adornment, with plenty for all, and blonde Demeter brings the flower of the field. . . . They have woven holy wreaths round your rose-filled bedroom. Like splendid Menelaus, but more tawny colored, follow your Helen, a wife who will not leave you. And afterwards you shall see dear children on your lap, like both your excellence and your wife's to look upon. I wish a famous painter would accurately depict your lifelike image, with his craft to work your beloved likeness, whose bright beams flash with joy like the moon. Your young body has surpassed prize-winning Bellerophon, and your beauty is that of measureless excellence. To judge impartially, you have outdone Achilles and Diomedes, and easily outstripped Ares and brave Herakles. Be gracious to me in my awe of you, so I may sing your song: I came sailing on my voyage, inspired by your measureless excellence. . . ."

### 1.10. Nonnus [5<sup>th</sup> c. CE]

"Zeus the Father received Dionysos after he had broken out of his mother's fiery lap and leapt through the delivering thunders half-formed; he sewed him in his manly thigh, while he waited upon the light of the moon which was to bring him to birth. . . . So the rounded thigh in labor became female, and the boy too soon born was brought forth, but not in a mother's way, having passed from a mother's womb to a father's. No sooner had he peeped out by this divine delivery, than the childbed Seasons crowned him with an ivy-garland in presage of things to come; they wreathed the horned head of a bull-shaped Dionysos with twining horned snakes under the flowers.

"Hermes, Maia's son, received him near the birthplace hill of Dracanon, and holding him in the crook of his arm flew through the air. He gave the newborn a surname to suit his birth, and called him Dionysos, or Zeus-limp, because while Zeus carried his burden he lifted his foot with a limp from the weight of his thigh . . . .

"Thus Hermes carried upon his arm the little brother who had passed through one birth without a bath, and lay now without a tear, a baby with a good pair of horns like the Moon. He gave him in charge of the daughters of Lamos, river nymphs – the son of Zeus, the vine-planter. They received Dionysos into their arms; and each of them dropt the milky juice of her breast without pressing into his mouth. And the boy lay on his back unsleeping, and fixed his eye on the heaven above, or kicked at the air with his two feet one after the other in delight; he stared at the unfamiliar sky, and laughed in wonder to see his father's vault of stars.

"The consort of Zeus beheld the babe, and suffered torments. Through the wrath of resentful Hera, the daughters of Lamos were maddened by the lash of that divine mischiefmaker. In the house they attacked the servants, in the crossroad they carved up a wayfaring man with an alien-slaying knife; they howled horribly, with violent convulsions they rolled the eyes in their disfigured faces; they scampered about this way and that way at the mercy of their wandering wits, running and skipping with restless feet, and the mad breezes made their wandering locks dance wildly into the air; the yellow shift round the bosom of each was whitened with drops of foam from the lips of the girls. Indeed they would have chopped up little Dionysos . . . in the distracted flood of their vagabond madness, had not Hermes come on the wing and stolen [him] again with a robber's untracked footsteps: the babe lately brought he caught up, and carried in his life-protecting bosom, until he brought him to the house where Ino had lately brought forth a son."

**Romanos the Melodist [d. c. 556 CE], *Hymns* 49.17**

“Has it not been granted to the disciples to prevail over everyone ...?  
So why are the fools outside [the Church] spoiling for a fight?  
Why do the pagans bluster and drone on?  
Why do they allow themselves to be deluded by the thrice-cursed Aratos?  
Why do they go astray in the company of Plato?  
Why are they fond of the feeble Demosthenes?  
Don't they realize that Homer is an idle dreamer?  
Why do they babble on about Pythagoras, who has rightly been silenced?  
Why don't they run with faith to those to whom has been revealed the Spirit all-holy

Let us praise, brothers, the tongues of the disciples, for it was not with clever speech,  
but with divine power that they caught every person.  
They took his cross as a fishing rod and used words as a line,  
and they fished the world.”

**Romanos the Melodist [d. c. 556 CE], *Hymns* 44.1, 3, 7**

“Licentiousness lures the young to forbidden pleasures,  
but purity bolsters the prudent with manly courage.  
When Joseph felt this tension in Egypt, he showed himself a just man:  
he trembled at the thought of sin ...  
because the eye that never sleeps sees everything.”

...

“Joseph's body was held in bondage, but the chaste champion  
kept his mind and will free.  
He, who once dreamed he was a king, had now been sold as a slave.  
Nevertheless, the captive controlled his captors.  
By his master he was praised; by his mistress he was desired.  
The master's intentions were honorable;  
the mistress' obsessions were futile.  
High-minded Potiphar genuinely admired Joseph;  
his base wife tried to bewitch her noble slave.  
Joseph's upright behavior delighted his master;  
Joseph's handsome face tortured his mistress.  
The husband entrusted his household to Joseph;  
the shameless wife surrendered her body to his.  
When Joseph realized this he fled,  
knowing that a terrible judgment awaits the sinner,  
because the eye that never sleeps sees everything.”

...

“When she flaunted her pollutions before the chaste youth,  
He loathed what he saw. The display was magnificent,  
But he recognized the twisted motives behind the splendor  
And rushed to flee from temptation, as from a lurking serpent.  
Now the miserable woman could not endure the prudent hero's scorn.  
She ripped away the last shame from her breasts  
And exposed her naked lust.

...

She tried to bewitch him with every wile,  
But she did not pervert his mind and will. ...  
Because the eye that never sleeps sees everything.”

## HISTORICAL LITERATURE

### **2.1 John Malalas [c. 490-565 CE], *Chronicle* 2.24**

“A man named Polymedon fell in love with Semele, daughter of Cadmus, who was exceedingly beautiful. ... He won her over, seduced her, and had a son by her. While Semele was carrying the child in her womb, a storm occurred with thunder and many flashes of lightning. The girl Semele was terrified and immediately gave birth to a seven-month baby, but she could not endure the pain and died. ... Because the child was delivered prematurely, he received a portion of life in addition to the time of his birth—and for this reason it was written that Zeus sheltered him in his own bosom for the rest of the time that he should have been in his mother’s womb. ... Men] deified Dionysios for discovering food for men from the vine. He discoursed about the vine and agriculture ... [and] learned some mystical practices. ...

“When Cadmus grew old ... he yielded the administration of his empire to ... his grandson Pentheus. ... But when Dionysius heard that his grandfather had grown old, he came to the city of Kadmeia with an armed force of distinguished men in order to reign there. [When] Pentheus saw that [Dionysius] had troops, was working miraculous displays, and was ... teaching the mysteries of the sun’s Bacchic rites to his female relatives ..., he was jealous ... and told everyone that Dionysios had been born out of wedlock. For this reason Euripides wrote a play called *The Bacchae* in which he gave these words to Pentheus: ‘Semele, brought to childbirth by union with a mortal, attributed the sin of the birth to Zeus.’”

### **2.2. Zosimus, *Historia Nova* [Recent History], 1.1 [c. 500 CE]**

“Having gained dominion over a certain part of Italy, which they in turn lost after Hannibal’s passage through it and after their defeat at Cannae [216 BCE], and having seen the enemy pressing upon their very walls, [the Romans] were raised to such great fortune that in scarcely fifty-three years’ time, they had acquired not only Italy but all of Africa ... and in the West had subdued the Spaniards. They sought yet more: they crossed the Ionian Gulf, conquered the Greeks and dissolved the Macedonians’ realm, capturing alive the man who was their king and taking him back to Rome. Now of such things, no one would attribute the cause to human strength, but rather to the Fates’ necessity, or the stars’ revolutions, or God’s will, which is attendant upon those pursuits of ours that are righteous. For these agents impose a certain sequence of causation upon future events, making them appear in such a way as to implant in people who judge human affairs aright the opinion that their administration is prescribed by providence: thus spirits thrive during periods of productivity, but, when sterility predominates, they decline to that condition which is now observed. What I am saying will of necessity be made manifest by the facts.”

### **2.3. Procopius, *History of the Wars: The Persian War* 1.1 [published in 551 CE]**

“Procopius of Caesarea has written the history of the wars that Justinian, the Roman Emperor, waged against barbarians in the East and West, just as each happened, that great deeds might not go unrecorded and that the vast progression of time might not overwhelm them, consign them to oblivion, and wipe them wholly from sight—deeds whose record he thought would be something great and highly beneficial both to the present generation and to those to come, if ever time should place men in the same kind of crisis again. For the example of a similar story can bestow benefits on those who are destined in future to go to war and take part in other kinds of contests, by revealing how the struggle went for earlier contenders, and by offering some idea of what outcome the present situation will probably have, at least for those who plan most wisely. He knew that he was himself best able to record this for the following reason: It so happened that he was chosen as adviser by the general Belisarius and was present with him at nearly everything that happened. He considered cleverness suitable for rhetoric, the telling of myth for poetry, but for history, truth. Accordingly he did not even conceal the failings of any of his closest associates, but recorded accurately what happened to everyone, whether they did well or otherwise.

Men who really wish to judge will find nothing greater or mightier than what happened in these wars. In them were done the greatest marvels of any that we know, unless any of my readers should award the prize to ancient times and refuse to consider happenings in his own time as marvels.”

#### **2.4. Procopius, *History of the Wars: The Gothic War* 2.29 [published in 551 CE]**

“While I watched the entry of the Roman army into Ravenna, the thought occurred to me that events are not brought about by human intelligence or any other kind of ability, but that there is something divine that always bends their wills and leads them on in the direction where there will be nothing to hinder what they’re doing. The Goths, on this occasion, who far exceeded their enemy in numbers and might, and had not fought a decisive battle since they entered Ravenna or been humbled by any other reverse, were made prisoners by their inferiors and did not consider the name of slavery an insult. The women—who had heard from their husbands that the enemy were tall in stature and beyond all number—spat in their husbands’ faces when they saw them as they sat at the gate. They pointed to the conquerors and reviled their husbands for their cowardice.”

#### **2.5. Agathias [c. 532-c. 580 CE], *The Histories*, preface**

“Seeing that in my own lifetime it has come to pass that great wars have broken out unexpectedly in many parts of the world, that wholesale migrations of barbarian peoples have taken place, that bewildering vicissitudes of fortune have occurred and unforeseeable and incredible events which in their outcome have upset all calculations, that nations have been wiped out, cities enslaved, populations uprooted and displaced, so that all mankind has been involved in the upheaval; seeing therefore that these and similar things had taken place, I was seized with vague misgivings and thought that it might be altogether reprehensible if I, for my part, were to pass over in silence and fail to record such staggering and momentous occurrences—occurrences that might well have a positive value for posterity. I decided therefore that it was not out of place for me to try my hand at history in order that my life not be spent entirely on the impracticable elaboration of poetic fantasy, but might be made to contribute something useful.”

#### **2.6. Gregory, bishop of Tours [539–594 CE], *History of the Franks*, preface**

“A great many things keep happening, some of them good, some of them bad. The inhabitants of different countries keep quarreling fiercely with each other, and kings go on losing their temper in the most furious way. Our churches are attacked by the heretics and then protected by the Catholics; the faith of Christ burns bright in many men, but remains lukewarm in others; no sooner are church buildings endowed by the faithful than they are stripped bare again by those without faith. However, no writer has come forth with sufficient skill to set things down in an orderly fashion and describe these events in prose or verse. In fact in the towns of Gaul the writing of literature has declined to the point that it has virtually disappeared.... I have written this book to keep alive the memory of those dead and gone, and to bring them to the notice of future generations. My style is not very polished, and I’ve had to devote much of my space to quarrels between the wicked and the righteous. All the same I’ve been greatly encouraged by certain kind remarks ... to the effect that few people can understand a rhetorical speech maker, whereas many can follow a plain speaker.... So that the sequence of time may be properly understood, I have decided to begin my first book with the foundation of the world.”

#### **2.7. Theophylact Simocatta, *History* 1.11 [completed c. 630 CE]**

“In this very year, a certain Paulinus, a man not undistinguished in the city, who had received an excellent education, was discovered to have thrust his soul down into the abyss of witchcraft. The manner of his conviction is an unusual story .... The wizard owned a silver basin, in which he used to collect the streams of blood whenever he communed with the apostate powers. This silver basin he sold to some merchants, [who] tried to dispose of the vessel in turn, and placed it before the doors of their own shop, allowing anyone who wished to purchase it. Then it was fated that the bishop of the city of Heracleia ... was at that time staying in Byzantium [Constantinople] and saw the wizard’s basin hung up for sale; he

joyfully purchased it, left the city and returned to his own seat. Since a bronze basin had received the divine aromatics of the martyr Glycera, out of respect for the relic, the bishop ... exchanged the [bronze for the silver] vessel. ... Thereafter the river of miracles ceased, and the fountain of grace was hidden ... for it is not right for the pure to touch the impure [to insert into my narrations an appropriate element of secular learning (i.e., a phrase from Plato)]. When this had in fact happened for many days and the misfortune had become known in the city, the priest was turned to grief: ... he mourned the interruption of the miracles ... sought the cause, and could not endure the shame .... Then, after God had both properly shunned the pollution and justly pitied the ignorance, the abominations connected to the basin were revealed in a dream to the bishop of the city. And so at once [he] removed from the shrine the basin which he'd purchased, restored the bronze one, and placed it before the relic. ... The relic was at once manifest again and aromatic showered down. ... When the priest returned to [Constantinople] and ascertained from the merchants who it was who had sold the basin, he approached the high priest John and revealed all that had occurred. John, who was distressed by the story, went immediately to the palace and told the emperor [Maurice]. Maurice was reluctant to execute the miscreants, preferring repentance to punishment. But the high priest overruled him and urged that those who had renounced the faith should be consigned to fire. ... The next day a court was convened, the wizards examined and, ensnared by inescapable condemnation, were handed over for punishment. Paulinus was impaled on a stout pole and then throttled—after having watched the execution of his son, whom he had taught the abominable sorcery of the wizards.”