BINARY OPPOSITION AND ARISTOCRATIC IDEOLOGY
IN ANTHOL. LAT. 386 SHACKLETON BAILEY
(= 390 RIESE)

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ABSTRACT
The poem by Eucheria, a case par excellence of \textit{adynata}, comprises the longest list of impossibilities and paradoxical liaisons in Classical literature. Traditional \textit{adynata} drawn from the realm of nature here undergo significant transformation, while new \textit{adynata}-motifs are constructed, all of which conform to the poem's fundamental concern with mating. The poetess' entire system of reasoning is based on a dualistic classification of social reality, represented as such by the twenty-seven incongruous pairs which function as literary signs indicating Eucheria's and the boorish servant's social class.

The poem can be read in a number of ways without the one cancelling the other. The ideological voice of the poem, the entire system of thematic oppositions and the poetess' declaration in the end show her commitment to the prevailing social order. One could also argue that the poem can be viewed as a declaration of Eucheria's non-compliance with prescribed patterns of behaviour forged by her Roman predecessors.

Introduction
This poem is presented as a response of a \textit{nobilis} woman to the approaches of a \textit{rusticus} suitor.\footnote{For a recent study of this poem, regarding mainly its linguistic complexities and some of the poetess' sources of inspiration, see M. Marcovich \& A. Georgiadou, 'Eucheria's \textit{adynata}', \textit{ICS} 13.1 (1988) 165–74.} According to Manitius, the poet to whom this piece is attributed, Eucheria (1.32), was very probably the wife of the highborn \textit{litteratus} Dynamius of Marseilles, a member of the circle of the poet Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530–c. 600).\footnote{M. Manitius, \textit{Geschichte der christlich-lateinischen Poesie bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts}, Stuttgart 1891, 471–72; also E.R. Curtius, \textit{European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages}, Princeton 1973, 92–98; P. Dronke, \textit{Women Writers of the Middle Ages}, Cambridge 1984, 28–29. Since there is no other evidence for the authorship of the poem other than the reference to Eucheria in line 32, she will be credited with it for the purposes of this article.} The only certain \textit{terminus ante...
quem for the dating of the poem is the quotation of line 31 of the poem by Julian, the archbishop of Toledo (680–690 AD),3 in his Grammar.4

Aurea concordi quae fulgent filia metallo
setarum cumulis consociare volo
sericeum tegmen, gemmantia texta Laconum,
pellibus hircinis aequiperanda loquor.
5
Nobilis horribili iungatur purpura burrae;
nectatur plumbo fulgida gemma gravi:
sit captiva sui nunc margarita nitoris
et clausa obscuro fulgeat in chalybe:
Lingonico pariter claudatur in aere smaragdus;
10 conpar silicibus nunc hyacinthus eat:
rupibus atque molis similis dicatur iaspis.
Eligat infernum iam modo luna chaos.
Nunc etiam urticis mandemus liilia iungi,
purpureamque rosam dira ciuita premat:
nunc simul optemus despectis piscibus ergo
delicias magni uullicicare freeti;
auratum crassantus amet, saxatilis anguem,
limacem pariter nunc sibi tructa petat;
altaque iungatur vili cum vulpe leaena,
20 perspicuam lynceum simius accipiat;
iungatur nunc cerea asino, nunc tigris ouagro,
iungatur fesso concita damna bovi.
Nectareum vitient nunc lasera tetra rosatum
melaeque cum fellis sint modo mixta malis;
gemmanatem sociemus aquam lutemunque barathrum;
stercoris mixtis fons eat inrigus.
Praepes funereo cum vulture ludat birundo;
cum bulbone gravi nunc philomela sonet;
tristis perspicua sit cum perdice cavanus
30 junctaque cum corvo pulchra columba cubet.
Haec monstra incertis mutent sibi tempora fatis
rusticus et servus sic petat Eucheriam!

The golden threads, shining with the glitter of the matching metal,
I want to unite with the heaps of bristles;
a silken cover, a Spartan fabric made with precious stones,
I want to compare with goatskins.

3. Riese dates the poem to the fourth century AD, while Marcovich (above, n. 1) 172, assigns it, on linguistic grounds, to the fifth or sixth.
Let a noble purple cloth be united with an awful shaggy garment; let a glittering gem be fastened together with a piece of heavy lead; let a pearl be captive of its sheen and let it shine while being shot up in a steel box; in the same way, let an emerald be enclosed in a Lingonic copper box; and a hyacinth gem be equal to a flint-stone; let a jasper stone be likened to a piece of massive rock.

Let the moon choose without delay the infernal chaos.

Let us now order the lilies to join the nettle, and let the ominous hemlock press upon the purple rose.

Let the noble lioness be united with the vile fox, let the monkey be satisfied with the pretty lynx. Let now the deer be united with a donkey, a tigress with a wild ass, an excited doe with a worn out bull.

Let the nimble swallow amuse itself with the ill-boding vulture; let now the nightingale sing together with the troublesome horned owl.

Let the sorrowful night-owl join the pretty partridge in love, let the beautiful dove lie down in love with the raven.

Let all these monsters exchange their way of life for an uncertain fate, then only may a boorish slave seek to possess Eucheria!

This poem, exploiting numerous adynata, differs substantially from other such poems. First, the adynaton-motif constitutes the framework of the

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entire poetic structure; this is not usually the case. In most similar pieces the *adynata* play only a subsidiary or reinforcing role in the shaping of the poem, whereas here their number—the largest, in fact, in Classical literature—is striking enough to arrest attention. Second, the idea of mating governs most of the *adynata*-pairs proposed either manifestly (*consociare*, *iungatur*, *iungi*, *iuncta*, *amen*, *amet*, *petat*, *accipiat*, *mixta*, *mixtis*, *sociemus*, *cubet*, *mi:rta*, *mi:r;tis*, *ludat*, *clau,datur*, *eligat*, *premat*, *cubet*, *sociemus*), or suggestively (*captiva*, *clau,datur*, *eligat*, *premat*, *ludat*). Third, the poetess' choice of *adynata* shows a conscious striving on her part for novelty and extravagance.

Certain general ideas expressed in the *adynata* of the poem, but not the particular pairs themselves can, in fact, be traced in Classical literature and appear to have a proverbial flavour. But when these ideas are transferred from the popular tradition, or from earlier poems, to Eucheria's piece, they undergo significant alterations of content, in order to conform to the poem's fundamental concern with mating. It is in the transformation of these traditional *adynata* and the construction of new *adynata*-themes that we find Eucheria's originality and sophistication most obviously displayed. A closer examination of the use of this stylistic device in the paradoxical unions which are proposed with mocking irony reveals a systematic effort by the poetess to avoid repetition of well-worn expressions of impossible situations and to experiment with new possibilities and ideas. At the same time, however, one can hardly fail to notice how artfully she integrates in her poetic composition concepts similar to those of her Roman predecessors. Her catalogue of *adynata*-pairs, for instance, provides an almost universal picture of nature: plant-life motifs (13–14), animal motifs (19–22), the elements of water (illustrated by different types of liquids, which in their turn form the natural environment of fish, 15–18, 23–26), earth (represented by various stones and gems, 6–11) and air (evoked by the mention of birds, 27–30), as well as celestial bodies (moon, 12). In this respect, this pictorial representation recalls familiar patterns in earlier poetry (cf. Tib. 1.4.61–66, 6. 

6. Cf., for instance, Anthol. Gr. 5.19: 9.575; Anthol. Lat. 440 Riese (= 438 Shackleston-Bailey) and 729 Riese, where the figure of *adynaton* is the governing idea of the poems in question.


Prop. 2.15.29-36, Ov. Trist. 1.8.1-10, lII. 31-44).

The difficulty in investigating the sources of Eucheria's direct borrowings from the rich stock of the *adynata*-tradition can be attributed to the ingenuity with which she avoids using motifs from a particular author. Her capacity to use in an imaginative and elaborate fashion the numerous artistic and thematic potentialities of this tradition has been demonstrated, to some extent at least, in an earlier study of the poem. Some of the sources of inspiration for Eucheria's composition have also been discussed there. This article may, I hope, cast some additional light on Eucheria's methods of adaptation of traditional *adynata*-motifs and thought processes, but it is written mainly with the ideological context of the poem in mind and the function of the proposed impossible unions within it.

*Adynata* as signifiers of the dichotomous structure of society: originality and tradition

At first glance, the poem looks like a *jeu d'esprit* and a *tour de force* devised to entertain a learned audience with the poetess' over-indulgence in witty and manneristic *adynata*. The final two verses, however, which form the climax of the proposed absurd unions, are clearly meant to reveal Eucheria's discontent with an established system of social, poetic or other values. One level of interpreting the poem is to view all sets of proposed impossible unions as literary signs acting as indicators of social class. A closer look at the long list of matchings which are proposed by Eucheria will illustrate her method at work. Her choice of the incongruous pairs has doubtless not been made at random, or simply on the basis of the incompatibility of their supposed *coniugium*, but it conceals a careful deliberation and an ulterior purpose. One could, in fact, argue that they all reflect, sometimes openly, sometimes in a disguised manner, Eucheria's and the rustic lover's identities; animals, for instance, are commonly used in the *adynata*-tradition for character-portrayal and tend to represent the dominant traits of the individuals for whom they stand.

Likewise, the elements of the other dyadic groups appear to serve a similar descriptive function: the golden (1), silk, gemmed (3) and purple clothes (5), as well as the heaps of bristles (2), goatskins (4), or rugs (5) symbolize and indicate each person's social class. In this way, Eucheria produces an imagistic depiction of human qualities through analogous, non-human types (inorganic elements, plants, animals, and so on). For example,
*gemmamenta texta* evoke the concepts of luxury, wealth and inaccessibility, as opposed to misery, wretchedness and poverty evoked through *pellibus hircina* (4); also the concepts of nobility, royalty and distinction suggested by the symbolic *alta leuena* are contrasted with the baseness, slyness and treachery evoked through the image of the *vulp§* (19); likewise, the concepts of purity, perfection and finesse suggested by the ‘crystal clear water’ are opposed to those of filthiness, impurity and peasantry associated with the ‘water mixed with dung’ (25). The ‘lilies’ (13) and the ‘rose’ (14), the ‘gold-fish’ (17) and the ‘trout’ (18) also point to the refinement and elegance of Eucheria’s class and are contrasted with the vulgar and cheap qualities of their counterparts. One could also argue that even the poetess’ name, *Eucheria*, which means fortitude, steadfastness or dexterity (εὐχέρεια), is intended to suggest a sharp antithesis to the word *servus*. The particular elements of the dyadic groups are not, of course, intrinsically opposed to each other. Their implied polarity—clearly identifiable, yet artificial—is problematic and the concepts and values imposed upon them by the poetess serve to make them appear polar opposites. The pairs, then, which bear little resemblance to the stereotyped binary opposites often found in the *adygata*-tradition, are not innately opposite, but still function as such in the poem through their associations. The poetess modifies and reconstructs reality; she manipulates it for her own purposes, so that she can eventually draw her socially conditioned conclusion (31-32). Her aristocratic values thus emerge as typical, inevitable and correct on all levels.

Eucheria illustrates her situation by drawing an analogy from the realm of nature. Her entire system of reasoning appears to be based on a dualistic classification of social reality which she arbitrarily proposes through the twenty-seven incongruous pairs of *adygata* taken from the world of nature, all of which serve her purpose, perhaps not the only one, of finally rejecting a humble boorish suitor. Eucheria is a high-born lady enjoying all the benefits of her social status, while he is a peasant and a servant tied to his plebeian origin and doomed to remain socially inferior to her for the rest of his life. Both belong by birth to different social classes and are, consequently, fatally destined never to meet, at least on the level of marriage.

Eucheria’s intransigence is justified, at least in part, by legal evidence regarding mixed status unions in late antiquity. The consequences were severe for women of the upper-class who crossed status lines and failed to

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13. A number of fables by Aesop deal with the treachery of the fox in its encounters with the lion; cf. also Pl. *Resp. 365c*, *Ar. Lys. 1269*.

14. For the use of binary oppositions as a device for the classification of heterogeneous elements, see J. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, Cornell 1975, 15–16.
maintain the standards of sexual behaviour expected of their class. ‘Ex-
plicit strictures against marriages between women and their slaves or former
slaves first appear’, notes Evans Grubbs, ‘at the end of the second century
AD and intensify during the third and early fourth centuries.’ According to
a law of 314 (Codex Theodosianus 4.12.1–4), if a free-born woman should
be ‘forgetful of her own reputation’ (suae ... immemor honestatis refers to
the dignity of free birth) and joined herself in contubernium with a man of
servile status, she lost her liberty and her children became the slaves of her
partner’s owner.15 Eucheria’s suitor is a slave (if, indeed, ‘servus’ is to be
taken literally here) and, as such, debarred from marriage with a free-born
citizen.

Assuming, then, that similar strictures were still applicable in the cen-
turies to which Eucheria’s poem may be assigned16—the legislative evi-
dence is not entirely coherent—one can readily argue that from Eucheria’s
point of view there were socially valid reasons for not wanting to marry
a slave. Another law, which was designed apparently to protect women
against undeserving marriages, allowed that a woman could refuse to marry
the man her father chose,17 if he was unworthy in status or behaviour
(Digest 23.1.11–12). Whether the poetess alludes here to her legal right
to object to a socially inferior marriage is unclear. In any case, the
probability must be kept in mind that the poetess may not be primarily
concerned to give here a factual description of her own situation. There
is no evidence that gives solid ground for the autobiographical character
of the poem other than the mere mention of her name (or that of her
literary persona) in the last line. This explanation may also cohere with
the absence of any reference to the identity of the suitor, and even the
explicit naming of persons in Roman amatory poetry does not yet warrant
the reality of their existence.18 The poetess may well have constructed an
imaginary framework which supplies the setting for her ideas and not her
life experiences.

To sum up: the ideological voice of the poem, the whole system of
thematic oppositions and the revelatory declaration in the end show the
poetess’ commitment to the prevailing social order and her anxiety to force
natural experiences to fit the shape of her particular world-view. The entire

15. There were a number of exceptions, however, to the general rule; see further G.
Clark, Women in Late Antiquity, Oxford 1993, 34; J. Evans Grubbs, Law and
Family in Late Antiquity, Oxford 1995, 263–77. On the social background of
couples in these mixed marriages, see bibliography provided by Evans Grubbs, 270
n. 50.

16. On the date of the poem, see note 3.

17. Marriages were arranged early by the girl’s family or guardian.

18. On the question of sincerity in Roman poetry, see G. Williams, Tradition and
poem can therefore be viewed as an expansion on the polarity of such social positions. The poetic text functions, then, as a stratified system in which meaning is governed by sets of oppositions and gains its effects only through constant clashes and tensions between these sets. Eucheria's aristocratic discourse shapes reality in its own image, acting as the institutional carrier and transmitter of the aristocratic way of life and its values.

The nouns in the dyadic sets of *adynata* are not the only representatives and indicators of the specific value system which is imposed on them. Most of the evaluative adjectives act as reinforcing qualifiers of the same principles, since they are used chiefly to amplify the strength of the evoked concept. For example, words like *purpura, rosa, leaena* and *vulpes* are already laden with the concepts of luxury, refined beauty, nobility and baseness, respectively. These words do not need additional intensifiers, such as the adjectives *nobilis, purpurea, alta* and *vulis* to evoke these qualities. This is not to say that the adjectives are simply ornamental; for it is through them that Eucheria openly reveals her revulsion towards the base, the unrefined and the lower-class and her admiration for the aristocratic and noble. Her hostility towards any possible mating of noble and base creatures progresses systematically. After Eucheria has exhausted her examples of misalliance from the mineral world, the plants, the fish and the animals, she proceeds to the human condition, and, more precisely, to her own case.

Worth noting is the easy transposition which she makes from the animal or plant world to human society, as if the same values and ideologies are valid and meaningful in all realms (the juxtaposition of the realm of nature with the human realm and the conception of human feelings as projections of natural forces were, of course, a literary convention in the *adynata*-poetry). In the case of fish, plants and minerals the comparable entities are indeed heterogeneous; for example, a lioness and a fox are actually two genetically different animals whose physical union would indeed be unthinkable. Likewise, there is no possible similarity between a rose and a lily, apart from the fact that they are both flowers. On the other hand, no essential difference should separate Eucheria and the rejected lover. The radical difference between them is not imposed by the laws of physical form, but rather by the laws of their society. So Eucheria, instead of deriving her own *adynaton* from an incongruous pair of two lions, or two monkeys etc., invents her own ludicrous sets of pairs, on which she imposes whichever impossibilities she desires, in order to achieve her purposes. It is only through the absurdity of her manipulated combinations that she can construct and corroborate her belief in the incongruity of an

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alliance between herself and the poor lover. This again is a commonplace in the adynata-poetry, where any disturbance in the accepted order in the realm of nature calls for a corresponding disturbance in the human sphere. Eucheria’s faith, however, in the immutability of the laws of nature supports her rejection of any violation of the expected pattern of social behaviour.

Eucheria’s models of inspiration

There is no doubt that Eucheria, being affiliated with the poetic circle of Fortunatus, was well acquainted with the poetry of her Roman predecessors, in which the theme of incompatible or well-matched unions was regularly used in erotic and other contexts. The idea of the unsuitability of a match is exploited, for instance, by Horace in Ode 1.33, which was addressed to the elegiac poet Tibullus. In this ode Horace offers consolation to Tibullus who has been jilted by Glyceria and explains that ‘it is Venus’ way to inspire unrequited love’ (10–12). Eucheria’s incompatible matings of animals (19–22) may have been inspired by Horace’s adynaton animal-motif of a roe mating with a wolf, although there is no exact parallel in the two poets’ choice of motif. In Eucheria’s poem there are clearer traces of Horace’s unnatural matings between different animals: in Epode 16.30–33 the impossible amorous liaison between the tiger and the deer (31) and the kite and the dove (32) recalls the mating between the doe and the bull, the tigress and the ass (22), and the dove and the raven (30) in Anthol. Lat. 386. The original pairs of Horace appear to have been pointedly recast by the poetess.

Eucheria’s debt to her predecessors is, of course, not limited to Horace, for other instances of such aemulatio may be detected in her matchings: echoes of Vergil’s, Ovid’s and other poets’ adynata-motifs are discernible in her poem; these she artfully incorporates and adjusts to cohere with her own situation. The motif of the ‘moon preferring to abide in the hellish chaos’ (12), for instance, may be seen as a variation on a familiar theme of the popular tradition, in which the stars enchanted by magic songs abandon

20. Cf. Hor. O. 1.35.28; 2.5.1–4; Prop. 3.25.8; Ov. Epist. 9.29–32; Stat. Silv. 5.3.159–61.
22. Note also the reference to the ‘Laconian clothes wrought with gems’ in Eucheria’s poem (3), which echoes perhaps Horace’s lines in O. 2.18.7–11 [nee Laconicas mihi / trahunt honestae purpuras clientae; / at fides et ingenii / benigna vena est, pauperemque dives / me petit: nihil supra]. One might expect here, instead of gemmata texta Laconum, a reference to the purpura Laconum, in which Sparta took a special pride (we know that the best European purple was produced in the district of Laconia; cf. Verg. Georg. 3.306; Aen. 4.262; Tib. 14.2.16). The poetess’ variation on the commonplace purpura Laconum is another instance of her strained attempt at sophistication.
their fixed position in the heavens and are led down from the sky;\(^{23}\) it may also be viewed as an echo of the *adynaton*, in which ‘dark night illuminates the earth’ (Sen. *Thyest.* 479–80; Sen. *Phoen.* 87–88) or of that in which ‘the sun’s light joins the light of the moon’ (Ov. *Rb.* 32).\(^{24}\) Again, in Eucheria’s list of animal and flower-*adynata*, we recognize themes already proposed in some form or another by her predecessors: note for instance, the use of a ‘fox’ (19; Verg. *Ecl.* 3.91), a lion (19; *Dirae* 4), a lion and a fox (Mart. *Epigr.* 10.100.3), lions and tigers (21; *Ecl.* 1.59; Hor. *O.* 3.5.31–32; Stat. *Silv.* 2.1.8–9), a dove (30; *Dirae* 5; *Ex Pont.* 1.6.51–52), an owl (29; Mart. *Epigr.* 10.100.4), or a rose\(^{25}\) (14; *Ex Pont.* 2.4.28).\(^{26}\) Also the use of metal analogies to indicate social status (6–10) is not unparalleled (cf. Pl. *Resp.* 415a–c; *Symp.* 219a;\(^ {27}\) likewise, the idea of metals hidden in other substances in lines 7–9 (cf. *Dirae* 100), or the rival songs of birds in line 28 (cf. Verg. *Ecl.* 9.36).\(^ {28}\)

Having established a link between the poetess and the literary tradition which supplied her subject-matter, it is worth considering the various levels of interpretation which, I hope, will situate the poem better in the tradition of the Latin amatory elegy and will also point to further models of inspiration for Eucheria’s composition. The meanings and literary purposes of the poem, as well as the choice of the *adynata*-motifs and their associative

24. See further, Rowe (above, n. 5) 1963, 159–60.
25. It has already been pointed out (see Marcovich & Georgiadou, above, n. 1, 169) that the flower-*adynata* of ‘lilies’, ‘nettles’, ‘roses’ and ‘hemlock’ are reminiscent of those of Theognis (1.537: οὔτε γὰρ ἐκ σκύλλης βόσκει τὸ ὦστ' ἵκανης). The connection between the two poets becomes stronger and more meaningful if the context of Theognis’ poem is also taken into account:

Οὔκ οὖν θειόκλητος θειόκλητος πέρυξεν,
ἀλλ’ αἰτὶ σκολίς, καθ’ ἐναν λόδον ἔχει.
οὔτε γὰρ ἐκ σκύλλης βόσκει τὸ ὦστ' ἵκανης,
οὔτε γὰρ ἐκ τούτων τοι θειόκλητος.

*Never is a slave’s head straight, but always crooked, and he has a bent neck. For neither a rose nor a hyacinth is born from a squill, nor does the child of a slave ever possess the qualities of a person of free birth.*

The association of beautiful flowers with the traits of the free class and ugly ones with those of the slaves is a remarkably unusual conjunction shared by these two poets.

26. Cf. Luc. *Apol.* 11; Diogen. 8.1 in E.L. Leutsch & F.G. Schneider (edd.), *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, Göttingen 1839–1851, 1.304. For the theme of love between trees, cf. the amorous relationship of the elm and the vine in Ov. *Amor.* 2.16, or the marriage of two palm-trees in Achilles Tatius (*Leuc. et Clit.* 1.17.3–5).\(^ {27}\) See also, Marcovich & Georgiadou (above, n. 1) 173.

27. For other instances of Vergilian echoes in Eucheria’s poem, see Marcovich & Georgiadou (above, n. 1), 199.
potentialities, are not easily exhausted, and there is no doubt that the poem can be read in a number of ways without any one cancelling any other. The aristocratic ideology which, as mentioned above, appears to permeate the entire list of the poem’s *adynamata*-pairs, could be one possible avenue to understand Eucheria’s poetic and social intents. But the poetess’ uncompromising declaration in the concluding lines of the poem in conjunction with her ingenious adaptation of traditional *adynamata*-motifs invites the reader to go beyond this level of interpretation and view the poem also as a declaration of her non-compliance with prescribed patterns of behaviour forged by her Roman predecessors. For instance, Ovid’s lighthearted, yet cynical, instructions to the lover about winning a mistress in the *Ars Amatoria* (Books 1 and 2) may have supplied Eucheria with the appropriate subject-matter to express her discontent with a set system of values; note especially 1.271–73, where the woman’s inability to resist a suitor is portrayed by Ovid through three *adynamata*-themes:

\begin{quote}
Vere prius volucres taceant, aestate cicadae,
Maenalius lepori det sua terga canis,
Femina quam iuveni blande temptata repugnet.
\end{quote}

*The birds will be silent in spring, the cicadas will be silent in summer, and the hound will run from the hare before a woman will fight off the blandishments of a suitor.*

A reversal of behaviour in animals would have to occur, Ovid claims, before a woman would fight off her suitor. It is probable that Eucheria here questions this convention and sharply reverses it. Again, in 1.343–46, we read:

\begin{quote}
Ergo age, ne dubita cunctas sperare puellas;
Vix erit e multis, quae neget, una, tibi.
\end{quote}

*Come then, do not doubt that you may hope to triumph over all women; hardly one out of many will there be to say no.*

Perseverance is the key to success, the poet concludes elsewhere (1.469–86), because even women who persistently refuse a suitor’s advances will eventually succumb. Ovid’s portrayal of women’s inability to resist a lover may, indeed, have prompted the poetess to differentiate herself and her own system of values from existing concepts of behaviour.

A third way of interpreting Eucheria’s rejection of the ‘boorish slave’ is by attaching no particular social reality to the term *servus* and examining its use in the light of Roman love elegy and the special connotations it acquired therein. According to the notion developed to its full form by
her Roman predecessors, the supreme power of Venus and Amor, the deities of love, reduced lovers to slaves. The theme of servitium amoris had indeed played a significant part in their writings, whereas it seems to have been only occasionally used in Greek literature of the period before the Roman elegists. The poetry of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid abounds in animated descriptions of love’s tyrannical passion and associations of the spiritual chains of Venus, Amor or the beloved with a slave’s fetters.

It is important to note that in this slave/master relationship it is the male who is invariably cast in the role of the slave, and the female in the role of the enslaver, although this convention, Hallett argues, ‘serves primarily as a poetic, and not a social protest.’ By having women control men in Roman amatory elegy, we have a sharp reversal of social reality, which may be the type that Eucheria is trying to depict with the long series of adynata. She may, in fact, be using the term servus in the same metaphorical sense as the Roman elegists did before her, but with entirely different intentions. One could argue, for instance, that she resents the sentimental excess of the amatory elegy and desires to redress the imbalance in the attitudes of her predecessors. Her originality, then, may be displayed in her refusal to accept the humiliating role assigned to the elegiac lover, his servile attitude towards the beloved and his total self-abnegation expressed in his willingness to undergo any hardships freely of his own accord for love’s sake. By doing so, Eucheria makes a radical rupture from a well-established literary convention.

Appendix: Responsor Puellae (Anthol. Lat. 727 Riese)

Riese, who dated Eucheria’s poem to the 4th century AD, suggested that the Respansum Puellae is a clear imitation of her poem, while Marcovich talks of ‘sure borrowings’ of Anthol. Lat. 729 (Riese) from Anthol. Lat. 386 (Schackleton-Bailey). It can be argued, indeed, that the anonymous poet

30. Although the notion of love as servitude was not absent from Greek literature prior to the efflorescence of Roman amatory elegy (cf. Eur. fr. 132; Pl. Symp. 183a), it seems to have undergone a radical transformation in the hands of the Roman elegists; see further, Copley (above, n. 29).
31. For the metaphorical use of terms pertaining to slavery in elegiac poetry, cf. Tib. 1.1.55; 1.2.99; 1.6.38; 1.8.7; 2.1.7; 2.4.1–4; 2.6.5, 17; 3.11.4; 3.13.22; Prop. 1.4.4; 1.5.19; 1.12.18; 2.15.36; 2.20.20; 3.19.28; 3.17.41; 3.21.6; 3.24.14; 3.25.3; Ov. Amor. 1.2.18 and 30.
32. Hallett (above, n. 29), 250–51.
33. See Marcovich & Georgiadou (above, n. 1), 167 and note 4.
of No. 729 made an unsophisticated short imitation of Eucheria's poem, and that it only makes sense if Anthol. Lat. 386 has been read in advance. On the other hand, Anthol. Lat. 729 could be regarded as the predecessor of the poem by Eucheria, which may have provided the framework upon which she built and expanded her own argumentation. A third possibility, however, should also be taken into account, according to which the Respnsuum Paullac could be viewed as a direct answer to the poem by Eucheria.\(^{34}\) After all, the latter's attitude towards the boorish suitor seems not to be quite clear and may lend itself to various interpretations.\(^{35}\) By this reading the poem leaves loose ends and is definitely without closure. In the Anthol. Lat. 729, on the other hand, a sharp and clear-cut solution is proposed: desine pompefere tu violare toro, not to mention the use of a series of negative words. A closer look at this poem shows that it is an almost line by line polemic and forceful rejection of the main symbolic pairings proposed by Eucheria. Its tone is blatant and decisive and does not leave any room for ambiguities. It starts exactly when Eucheria decides to spare us, at the end, from a much longer list of impossibilities, and so it terminates her unclear and unfinished thoughts. What may therefore seem at first sight to be a borrowing or a poor imitation in Anthol. Lat. 729, could actually be the second voice of Eucheria's poetry, which attempts to discard any doubts left in the latter's mind.\(^{36}\)

\(^{34}\) The writing of two or more versions on the same theme is certainly not uncommon in Classical literature. I can recall at least one example from the Greek Anthology, where we have five different votive epigrams dealing with the incident regarding the priest of Cybele and the lion: 6.217 by Simonides, 6.218 by Alcaeus, 6.219 by Antipater, 6.220 by Dionscorides and 6.227 by Antistios. All five appear to agree with one another as to the basic phases of the tale, and yet they differ substantially in the amount of detail provided, the emphasis on different aspects of the incident, and the poetic language.

\(^{35}\) We can even go so far as to consider words like solo, aequiperanda loquor in conjunction with the subsequent subjunctives as revealing Eucheria's latent desire for such a union. She may feel that the idea of the proposed union is too appealing for her to resist. Thus, concerned that she might not be able to resist the rustic suitor for long, she may be seen as trying to steel herself against this temptation by demonstrating in a series of absurd pairings the incompatibility of the match; a typical example of women's inability to resist a lover is given by Ovid, Ars. 1.269-74.

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