

AUSONIUS and MOSELLA

*Quis color ille vadis, seras cum propulit umbras
Hesperus et viridi perfudit monte Mosellam!
tota natant crispis iuga motibus et tremuit absens
pampinus et vitreis vindemia turget in undis.*

What colour are they now, thy quiet waters?
The evening star has brought the evening light,
And filled the river with the green hillside;
The hill-tops waver in the rippling water,
Trembles the absent vine and swells the grape
In thy clear crystal. "Mosella", line 192;

translation from *Medieval Latin Lyrics*

Decimus Magnus Ausonius

- Born in Burdigala c 310 AD to Gallo-Roman parents ; his father was a doctor
- Educated in grammar and rhetoric at the university of Bordeaux, then in Toulouse, where his uncle was a professor
- Trained as an advocate, but preferred teaching
- Professor of rhetoric at Bordeaux for about 30 years. Attracted many pupils, most famous was Paulinus, later Bishop of Nola
- In the 360s, the Emperor, Valentinian, invited him to go to teach his son Gratian. Held in affection and respect by father and son.
- Wrote *Mosella* c 370, in praise of the river Moselle
- 375 Gratian became Emperor and showered Ausonius and his family with honours Ausonius was made Praetorian Prefect of Gaul. In 379 he became consul.
- 383 Gratian assassinated. Ausonius retired to his *nidus senectutis* near Bordeaux and wrote poetry.
- His work ranged from Christian hymns and elegies on deceased relations to translations from the Greek Anthology and centos from Virgil.
- Died c 394

The last Latin poet?

Roman culture continued to flourish in fourth century Gaul. The province enjoyed peace and considerable prosperity and six of its cities possessed famous schools of oratory. Ausonius' poems contain many echoes of Virgil and other classical poets. But the world was changing:

- Christianity was now the official religion of the Empire (Ausonius was a Christian, but few of his poems reflect this)
- The Empire was first split between east and west in the 360s and divided finally in 395.

The first French poet? His appreciation of nature's beauty foreshadows later romantic poets

A bad poet?

The poetical fame of Ausonius condemns the taste of his age (Edward Gibbon).

The Hymn

Salve, amnis, laudate agris, laudate colonis,
Dignata imperio debent cui moenia Belgae:
Amnis odorifero iuga vitea consite Baccho,
Consite gramineas, amnis viridissime, ripas:
Navigator ut pelagus, devexas pronus in undas
Ut fluvius, vitreoque lacus imitate profundo
Et rivos trepido potes aequiperare meatu
Et liquido gelidos fontes praecllere potu:

The depths

Spectaris vitreo per levia terga profundo,
Secreti nihil amnis habens: utque almus aperto
Panditur intuitu liquidis obtutibus aer
Nec placidi prohibent oculos per inania venti,
cum vada lene meant liquidarum et lapsus
prodit caerulea dispersas luce figuras:
Quod sulcata leui crispatur harena meatu,
Inclinata tremunt viridi quod gramina fundo;
Usque sub ingenuis agitatae fontibus herbae
Vibrantes patiuntur aquas lucetque latetque
Calculus et viridem distinguit glarea muscum:

(lines 55-8, 61-67)

Greetings! River praised for farmlands
Praised by farmers, for you brought
Here to them those walls of Trier
Worthy of a Caesar's court.

Greetings! River flanked by hillsides
Promising the scent of wine
Flanked with banks of lushest grasses;
Green your grass and green your vine. (lines 23 - 30)

River, you have no secrets!
I can see through glass-clear depths
To your smooth bed.
It's just like looking through liquid air
Gentle breezes don't hinder your view

When your stream glides slowly, / when your shining waters
betray / scattered shapes in the sky-blue light.
Look! The sand is ridged by the gentle current;
Water-plants bending with the flow make the bottom green;
Beneath the natural springs / their leaves are constantly in motion
Not a pebble gleams - now it is hidden;
There gravel shows off green moss.

The whole picture is like Scotland, where the tide draws back to reveal
Green seaweed, red corals, the milky berries that grow in oysters

The Fish

*Tu mihi flumineis habitatrix Nais in oris,
Squamigeri gregis ede choros liquidoque sub alveo*

Dissere caeruleo fluitantes amne cateruas.

*Squameus herbosas capito inter lucet harenas
Viscere praetenero fartim congestus aristis
Nec duraturus post bina trihoria mensis,
Purpureisque salar stellatus tergora guttis,
Et nullo spinæ nociturus acumine rhedo,
Effugiensque oculos celeri levis umbra natatu.*

*Nec te, delicias mensarum, perca, silebo,
Amnigenos inter pisces dignande marinis,
Solus puniceis facilis contendere nullis:*

*Hic etiam Latio risus praenomine, cultor
Stagnorum, querulis vis infestissima ranis,
Lucius, obscuras ulva caenoque lacunas
Obsidet; hic nullos mensarum lectus ad usus*

Fervet fumosis olido nidore popinis.

*Quis non et virides, vulgi solacia, tincas
Norit et alburnos, praedam puerilibus hamis,
Stridentesque focis, obsonia plebis, alausas?*

*Tu quoque flumineas inter memorande cohortes,
Gobio, non geminis maior sine pollice palmis,
Praepinguis, teres, ovipara congestior alvo
Propexique iubas imitatus, gobio, barbi.*

See that gleam of light among the sand and weed?
Those are a chub's scales. His flesh is really tender,
But he's packed with bones. Best serve him up within six hours.
That fish with purple-spotted back - that's a trout.
There's a roach, see it? It won't harm you - its spine has no sharp points.
Did you catch that swift shadow?
A light grayling was swimming to escape from sight.

Oh, and you perch, you'll have your mention too
You table delicacy. Of all freshwater fish,
You are most like sea fish, the only one
That can easily compete with red mullet

Hidden in holes dark with sedge and mud, lurks the pike,
Lucius - a Latin name - a power most hateful to
Complaining frogs. He cooks in smoky bars
With rank smell - no use for the dinner table.

Everyone knows the green tench, common folk's comfort,
And the bleak that young lads catch with hooks,
And shad, sizzling over the fire, the poor man's food.

Gudgeon, among the river's shoals you deserve a word:
You're no bigger than two palms, not counting thumbs
But very fat, smooth, womb stuffed with roe,
With a crest like the bearded barbel (lines 82-94, 115-117, 120-134)

Satyrs and Nymphs

Hic ego et agrestes Satyros et glauca tuentes
Naidas extremis credam concurrere ripis,

These scenes delight not humans only.
Rustic Satyrs I fancy,
Grey-eyed Naiads too,
Come here, run to the water's edge

Capripedes agitat cum laeta protervia Panas
Insultantque vadis trepidasque sub amne sorores
Terrent indocili pulsantes verbere fluctum.

Wanton joy spurs on goat-footed Pans.
They leap into the shallows,
Splash wildly with their fists
And terrify their under-water sisters

Saepe etiam mediis furata e collibus uuas
Inter Oreiadas Panope fluvialis amicas
Fugit lasciuos, paganica numina, Faunos.

Often too, while stealing grapes in the hills,
Among the friendly Oreiads,
Panope, the river nymph
Flees country deities, the lustful Fauns.

Dicitur et, medio cum sol stetit aureus orbe,
Ad commune fretum Satyros vitreasque sorores
Consortes celebrare choros, cum praebuit horas
Secretas hominum coetu flagrantior aestus;

They say that when the fiery sun is highest
Satyrs and glass-green nymphs
dance by the riverside,
When heat has banished mortals out of sight

Tunc insultantes sua per freta ludere Nymphas
Et Satyros mensare vadis rudibusque natandi

Then leaping through their streams the Nymphs,
Duck the Satyrs in play
and dodge their grasp,
since they are clumsy and unskilled in swimming

Per medias exire manus, dum lubrica falsi
Membra petunt liquidosque foveant pro corpore fluctus.

The Satyrs, cheated, chase those slippery limbs,
They stretch out arms / and clasp in vain /
the river water instead of those Nymph-bodies. (lines 170-185)

All other rivers will bow to the Moselle

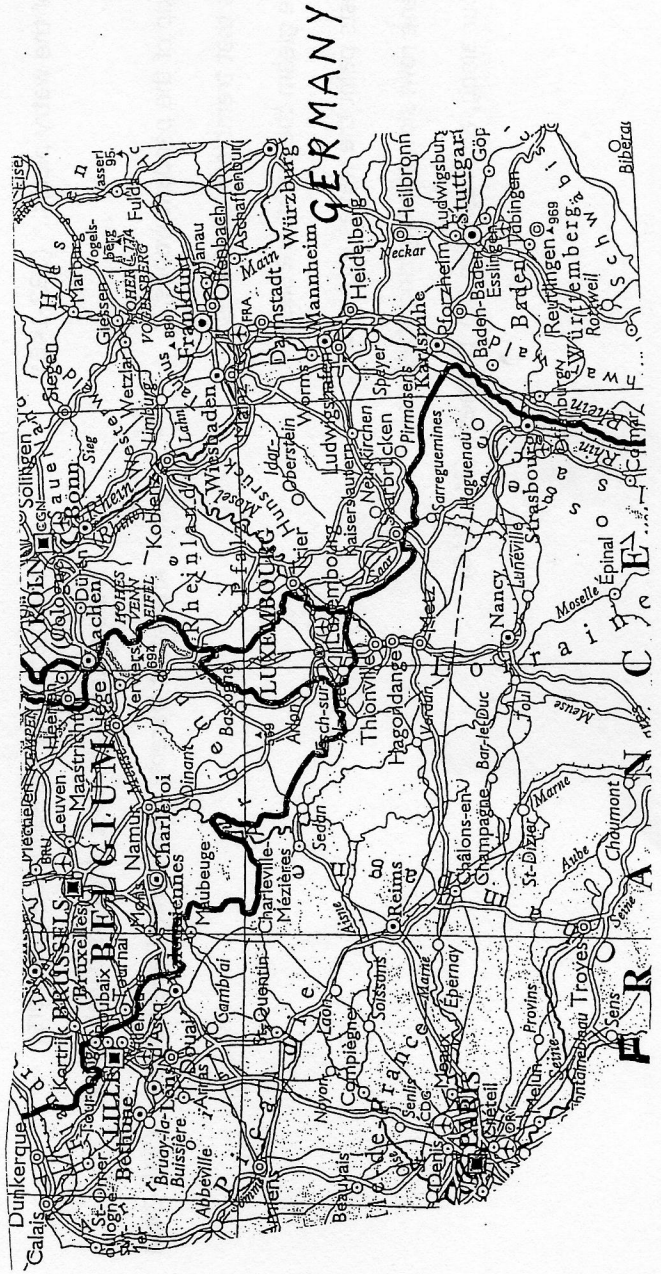
Non tibi se Liger anteferet, non Axona praeceps,
Matrona non, Gallis Belgisque intersita finis,
Santonico refluus non ipse Carantonus aestu.
Concedet gelido Durani de monte volutus
Amnis, et auriferum postponet Gallia Tarnen,

Te stagnis ego caeruleis magnumque sonoris
Amnibus, aequoreae te commendabo Garunnae.

Loire will not claim first position, / Nor the Aisne that rushes headlong,
Not the river Marne, the boundary / Separating Gauls and Belgians,
Nor the river Charante even, / With its tidal flow at Saintonge.
And the stream that rushes downwards / From the freezing mountain summit
Of Duranus will be yielding / Pride of place to you clear waters;
Gaul will rank the Tarn beneath you..... (lines 461-465)

Then my poem will commend you / To the pools that echo heaven,
To the great loud-sounding rivers / To my own Garonne in Bordeaux
Spreading grandly like the ocean. (lines 482-3)

Translation by David Parsons. See www.parsonsd.co.uk/moselle.php



From Windsor Forest by Alexander Pope

The patient fisher takes his silent stand,
Intent, his angle trembling in his hand;
With looks unmov'd, he hopes the scaly breed,
And eyes the dancing cork, and bending reed.
Our plenteous streams a various race supply,
The bright-ey'd perch with fins of Tyrian dye,
The silver eel, in shining volumes roll'd,
The yellow carp, in scales bedrop'd with gold,
Swift trouts, diversify'd with crimson stains
And pykes, the tyrants of the watry plains. (137-146)

The watry landskip of the pendant woods,
And absent trees that tremble in the floods;
In the clear azure gleam the flocks are seen,
And floating forests paint the waves with green.
Thro' the fair scene rowl slow the ling'ring streams,
Then foaming pour along, and rush into the Thames. (211-216)

Around his throne the sea-born brothers stood,
Who swell with tributary urns his flood:
First the fam'd authors of his ancient name,
The winding Isis and the fruitful Tame:
The Kennet swift, for silver eels renown'd;
The Loddon slow, with verdant alders crown'd;
Cole, whose clear streams his flow'ry islands lave;
And chalky Wey, that rolls a milky wave:
The blue, transparent Vandalis appears;
The gulphy Lee his sedgy tresses rears;
TAnd sullen Mole, that hides his diving flood
And silent Darent, stain'd with Danish blood (335-346)