CHAPTER 5

Classical and Biblical Allusions

William of Tyre included many references to the Bible and various ancient authors, such as Virgil, Juvenal, and Josephus. His writing style also imitates these authoritative texts. His treatment of the kings of Jerusalem is comparable to Einhard’s *Vita Caroli*, which contains a quotation from Cicero. While William may not have been directly knowledgeable of all classical authors he was clearly aware of historical texts that were popular in the medieval period.\(^1\)

An example of the translator eliminating this classical material included by William of Tyre occurs in Book 4.10. The chapter consists of a physical description of Antioch and its surroundings. William mentions a mountain near Antioch called ‘mons parlier’ and says that many believed it to be Mount Parnassus, famous for the Oracle of Delphi, but noted that this belief was incorrect because Mount Parnassus was in Thessaly. William devoted fifty-five lines to a discussion of various myths and legends relating to the Oracle, including prophecies, comprising quotations from a variety of works, such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Solinus’s *Polyhistor*, Theodoricus’s *Historia Tripartita*, and Rufinus’s *Ecclesiastical History*, as well as a description of the streams surrounding Mt. Parnassus.\(^2\) The translator chose to omit most of this material.

Une partie de ce mont s’en vet a la mer et est mout haut liec; si que il a son non par soi, car l’en le claime Montparlier. Aucune gent cuident que ce soit Parnasus, uns mons dont les escriptures parolent mout, por une fontaine qui siet au pié, eu lieu que l’en claime l’eschiele-Buiemont; mes sanz faile, ne ce n’est li monz, ne ce n’est la fontaine dont li auteur parolent tant; car icil monz Parnassus siet en la terre qui a non Thessalie.\(^3\)

[A part of this mountain which faces towards the sea and is the highest point, it is named after this point, for it is called Monparlier. Some men believe that this is Mt. Parnassus, a mountain which the Scriptures speak much about, because a spring lies at its foot, in the place that is called the Steps of Bohemond; but without fail, this is not the mountain that the

\(^1\) Edbury and Rowe, pp. 32–35.
\(^2\) wt, 4.10 lines 18–73.
\(^3\) Paris, 4.10 vol. 1 pp. 134–135.
other authors speak of, for this Mount Parnassus lies in the land that is called Thessaly.]

The translator retained William’s comment that conflating ‘mons parlier’ with Mount Parnassus was incorrect but removed background material relating to it. Perhaps the Oracle of Delphi would have been of interest to his audience, while more detailed discussion would not. This general trend of omitting references to classical authors continues throughout the translation. References to well-known figures from classical history, however, are kept. These include a reference to Julius Caesar and the Roman dominion over Egypt,\textsuperscript{4} as well as a reference to Alexander the Great expanded from ‘Alexandri Macedonis’\textsuperscript{5} to ‘Alixandres li Grans, rois de Macedoine’.\textsuperscript{6}

In addition, the translator added two classical references. The first occurs in Book 11.14 and relates to Dido having been born in Sidon. In Book 13.1 William also mentioned Dido when discussing Tyre, and the translator retained this reference.\textsuperscript{7} Like Caesar and Alexander the Great, Dido was a well-known figure from classical history. Another well-known figure is the subject of the translator’s extended addition where he contrasts Baldwin II with Xerxes in Book 12.1. This addition which involved a complete reworking of the chapter was the subject of a detailed discussion by Mireille Issa.\textsuperscript{8} The material does not seem to have come from a known source, such as the \textit{Histoire Universelle}. The translator put a speech into the mouth of Xerxes in which he tells his nobles that he did not need to take counsel from them in order to attack Greece. This then is contrasted with Baldwin II, whom the translator depicted as being a wise ruler for taking counsel from the nobility.

\begin{quote}
Sersés fu uns poissanz rois de la terre qui a non Aise, et avoit mout grant contenz au roiaume de Grece. Touz ses barons manda un jor, et quant il furent tuit assemble, il parla premiers, et leur dist: ‘Biau seigneur, je vos ai ci mandez, seulement por fere semblant que je preigne conseil à vos, coment je me contendrai vers ceux de Grece, qui mainz torz me font; savoir se je les guerroierai on non. Mès ce vos di-je bien que ne vos demanderai nul conseil; ainçois sachiez certeinnement que je les guerroierai: à vous apartient sanz plus à obéir à mon comandement, ne mie à
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{wt}, 19.27 lines 21–26; Paris 19.28 vol. 2 pp. 902–903.
\item \textsuperscript{5} \textit{wt}, 4.9 lines 8–9.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Paris, 4.9 vol. 1 p. 133.
\item \textsuperscript{7} \textit{wt}, 13.1 lines 28–34; Paris, 13.1 vol. 1 p. 476.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Issa, pp. 64–66.
\end{itemize}