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Published on: 01 Jan 2019 - Classical World (Johns Hopkins University Press)











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Classical World, Volume 112, Number 4, Summer 2019, pp. 335-355 (Article)



Published by Johns Hopkins University Press DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/clw.2019.0044

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Close Encounters? Giovanni Pascoli's *Crepereia Tryphaena* (1893): Accessing Roman Childhood Through the Lens of a Romantic Neo-Latin Poem

CHRISTIAN LAES

ABSTRACT: This article introduces the readers to *Crepereia Tryphaena*, a poem by Giovanni Pascoli from 1893, written in Sapphic strophes. The archaeological discovery of a second-century sarcophagus of a young woman who was buried along with her wedding gifts forms the starting point for this poem. At the same time, Pascoli approaches the topic as a *poeta senza storia*: to him, childhood and youth are eternal and fundamental categories of human existence, not bound by limits of space and time. The introduction to and literary analysis of the poem is followed by a reflection on the relation between fiction and 'historical truth'.

I. Giovanni Pascoli (1855–1912): A Literary Hero, Only in Italy?

For many reasons, Giovanni Pascoli is an author who deserves to be known and read by students of Latin worldwide. Not only do his Latin

This publication took shape during a Visiting Professorship at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) by a grant of the Fonds National Suisse, program Scientific Exchange. I am very grateful to Véronique Dasen and the wonderful team of her ERC Advanced Grant project 'Locus Ludi: The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity' for a most inspiring research environment. Many thanks also go to Heidi De Baerdemaeker-Poole (Waterford School, Salt Lake City) who in many ways improved my English. During the conference Audax Iapeti Genus (Vivarium Novum, Frascati, Italy, 11th of November 2018) this article profited from valuable suggestions by friends and colleagues of the Academia Latinitati Fovendae: Luigi Miraglia (Academia Vivarium Novum), Dirk Sacré (Catholic University of Leuven), and Kurt Smolak (University of Vienna). The anonymous referees of *CW* provided me with stimulating suggestions and ideas, for which I am most grateful.

¹ In the context of this contribution, it is not feasible to strive for any comprehensive bibliography. For those wishing to stay up-to-date with Pascolian scholarship, Felcini

and his virtuosity in meter rival that of his great masters of classical Latin poetry—the study of his work also offers a unique opportunity to introduce students to society and daily life in Antiquity as well as the history of ideas of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Italy.

It is not an exaggeration to state that Pascoli's Latin works have been studied to a degree that sets the poet on a par with his great predecessors of the classical era. We now have at our disposal editions, commentaries, lexica, and dozens of specialized studies on Pascoli as a Latin writer, next to a journal dedicated to scholarship on Pascoli. Here, both his Latin and Italian literary works in prose and poetry are studied. However, nearly all of these meritorious studies have been published in Italian, and to a lesser extent in Latin. As a result, little attention has been paid to Pascoli in Anglo-Saxon scholarship.

To Italians, Pascoli is mostly known for his Italian poetry. His status as a "national hero" is apparent: his birthplace San Mauro di Romagna was renamed San Mauro Pascoli, he is depicted on Italian two-euro coins, Alitalia named an airbus after him, and 2012 was officially celebrated as a jubilee year remembering the hundredth anniversary of his passing away.

In this contribution, I introduce the readers to a poem (included at the end of this article) with a typical Pascolian theme. In Sapphic strophes full of elegance and metrical virtuosity, the poet prevents us with one of his favorite topics: Roman childhood and youth. He does so by inserting a great deal of details, which time and again testify to his profound and intimate knowledge of both ancient literature and *realia* on Roman weddings and family life. The archaeological discovery of a second-century sarcophagus of a young woman who was buried along

^{1979,} the annual Instrumentum Bibliographicum Neolatinum of the journal Humanistica Lovaniensia and the Rivista Pascoliana [https://accademiapascoliana.wordpress.com/about/] are at hand. In the nice little booklet Pascoli 1984, the reader finds everything for a first acquaintance with the poet and his *poemata christiana*: an excellent introduction is offered by Traina, along with a thoughtful bibliographical survey, Italian translations of the poems inserted and a concise commentary. The 1257-page Mammuth edition on Pascoli from 2009 offers his entire poetical oeuvre, both Italian and Latin poems, at an affordable price. Essential introductions to Pascoli as a Latin poet include Bragantini 1973, Hartmann 1920 or Traina 2006. For those who are deterred by Italian or Latin, Mahoney 2010 offers an accessible English introduction. For a Dutch readership, Sacré 1997 and Laes 2014 have introduced Pascoli as a poet of Roman childhood, in much the same way as this article attempts to do. Pascoli 1961 is the compelling life story of the *poeta tormentato*, written by his beloved sister Maria.

with her wedding gifts forms the starting point for this poem. At the same time, Pascoli approaches the topic as a *poeta senza storia*: to him, childhood and youth are eternal and fundamental categories of human existence, not bound by limits of space and time. By nostalgically identifying himself with the bridgeroom who had lost hist young bride on the day of the wedding, Pascoli aims to bridge the gap between people who are separated by a time span of nearly 2,000 years. My introduction to and literary analysis of the poem will be followed by a reflection on the relation between fiction and "historical truth." In the end, I will consider which approach provides us with a closer understanding of ancient life and whether such closeness, if at all attainable, is desirable.

II. Crepereia Tryphaena: The Archaeological Records

On May 10th, 1889, a remarkable sarcophagus was uncovered during excavations for the construction of the Palace of Justice and the Umberto I bridge crossing the Tiber river. According to the inscription, the sarcophagus belonged to a young woman named Crepereia Tryphaena.² The beautiful marble lateral side of the sarcophagus was engraved with an impressive scene, alluding to the death of the girl, who is depicted as lying on a funeral bed, with her head resting on her left shoulder. On the footside of the bed sits a veiled matron who stares at the deceased. On the opposite side stands a male figure, also deeply grieving.

When opening the sarcophagus, the archaeologists were astounded at the sight of the young girl's remains. As Lanciani notes, throughout the centuries, the sarcophagus, which was found at a depth of twent-five feet, had slowly been filled with groundwater. As a result, it was deemed preferable to open it in situ as opposed to moving it to an archaeological repository. Through the clear and fresh water it seemed as if her skull was still covered by thick, long, and waiving hair.³ The remarkable discovery, and especially the detail of the miraculous hair, attracted a great deal of public attention. As a result, the exhumation of Crepereia Tryphaena was carried out with great reverence and remained a memorable event for those who had witnessed it or had heard about it (Ghiselli 2009: 34). The hair phenomenon is of course easily explained:

² The inscription is now catalogued as CIL 6.35061: Crepereia Tryphaena.

³ The original report by Lanciani 1889 can now be read online.

along with the groundwater, the seeds of an aquatic plant or filamentous bacteria had entered the sacrophagus and settled on the skull, eventually producing what appeared to be long strands of hair.

Aside from this, the sarcophagus contained several interesting items: a beautifully carved ivory doll (22 cm. height), with articulation in the groin, elbows, knees, and shoulders; four small mirrors; two little combs; two linked together golden rings; a small golden ring holding a little key; a little ivory box; a golden ring with an inscribed cameo bearing the name "Filetus"4; a golden seal ring; another golden seal ring with red jasper; a brooch with a carving in amethyst; a distaff with a little ring; earrings made of gold and pearl; a golden necklace with pendants in beryllium; and a crown of myrtle.⁵ The rich grave offerings combined with the depiction on the lateral side point to a young woman, approximately eighteen years of age, who died just before her wedding to a man called Filetus. The hairstyle of the doll dates the sarcophagus to the late second century c.e., more precisely in the decade of 150 to 160.6 Next to Crepereia Tryphaena's sarcophagus another sarcophagus was found, bearing the name of Crepereius Euhodus, in all likelihood a close family member. The Greek origin of the cognomina Euhodus and Tryphaena points to either a foreign or a servile background, though it is impossible to know whether Crepereius Euhodus was a freedman himself of a patron called Crepereius, or the descendent of an earlier freedman. In any case, the Greek name Filetus refers to a Greek connection for Tryphaena's fiancé too.

III. The Background of the Crepereia Tryphaena Poem

Though the poem seems to suggest the opposite, Pascoli never actually attended the excavations of May 1889. Undoubtedly, the remarkable story of the discovery and the excavation report by Lanciani were well known to him. Using these as his inspiration, Pascoli composed two Latin poems in honor of the wedding of Teresa Martini, daughter of

⁴ The ring has the spelling with the letter F, while Pascoli in his poem preferred the Greek Ph at verse 64. Throughout this article, I will use the spelling Filetus.

⁵ Extended descriptions of the items in the Catalogue from 1983; Ghiselli 2009: 35–37 and, as a result of the recent exhibit in the Museum of Centrale Montemartini, also online at: http://www.centralemontemartini.org/collezioni/percorsi_per_sale/sala_colonne/crepereia_tryphaena/corredo_di_crepereia_tryphaena [seen 10th of December 2017].

⁶ Fayer 2017: 92–94 for a recent survey, mainly based on the Catologue from 1983.

Ferdinando Martini, Italy's Minister of Public Education and Pascoli's personal friend. Both poems, *Crepereia Tryphaena* and *Gallus moriens* (The Dying Gaul), deal with death as it is expressed in ancient artifacts, which were already on display in the Capitoline museums in Pascoli's time: the young girl Crepereia Tryphaena buried along her wedding gifts, and the famous sculpture of the Dying Gaul. The choice for the theme of death for a joyful wedding ceremony may seem morbid, but fits very well in the cultural and intellectual fashion of the time. Ferdinando Martini himself had some merits in classical scholarship. Both the cultural elite and the general public of late Ottocento Rome were fond of stories on spectacular or remarkable archaeological discoveries. Offering an elaborate Latin work full of learned allusions to a far-away past as a nuptial gift was part and parcel of the cultural exchange among the bourgeoisie (Calesssi 1998; Ghiselli 2009: 24–32 and 173–74).

The carefully emended drafts of the Crepereia Tryphaena poem, preserved in the archives of Castelvecchio, Pascoli's long time place of residence, give us a good idea of the evolution of the poem. From his correspondence, we know that Pascoli started writing on September 26, 1893, during a stay in Rome from September 23rd to the 28th on the occasion of commission meetings regarding the teaching of Latin in Italian secondary schools. A letter from September 27, 1893 proves that the Ode was not yet finished that day. However, Pascoli must have dealt with it in the following days, as he did with the Gallus moriens, since both poems were ready for the wedding, which took place on October 18, 1893. The work was elegantly typeset by the publishing house Vighi di Livorno, and reached the bride's father together with an elegant accompanying letter, in which Pascoli expressed his highest esteem for the Minister and his undertakings (Calessi 1998). A Latin dedication accompanying the two poems has been preserved in the archives of Castelvecchio. From this, it appears that Pascoli himself did not attend the wedding ceremony, as he was in Livorno during these days (in fact, he was working there as a teacher of classics in a liceo classico in the period 1887-1895: Ghiselli 2009: 173-74).

IV. A First Exploration of the Poem

With the archaeological background of the Crepereia discovery in mind, we now start the reading of the poem, for which my English translation—which lacks any literary pretention—can be of assistance. My commentary merely has practical aims, and owes a lot to the excellent

work done by Ghiselli. It primarily aims at introducing the poem to English readers and an audience less acquainted with Pascolian scholarship. I also pay attention to socio-cultural background information, and some translation difficulties which have not been settled satisfactorily by Ghiselli.

Already in the **first strophe** the reader is confronted with the atmosphere of gloominess and the theme of flight, both symbolized by the action of black birds, namely ravens and crows. The juncture *urbis quadratae* (2–3) is a learned resonance of an Ennian quote: *et qui se sperat Romae regnare quadratae* (Ennius, Ann. 4.150 ed. Skutsch).

The **second strophe** leads the readers to the day of the excavations, the 10th of May 1889. The Tiber is mentioned as Etruscan in Vergil's Georgics 1.499 (Tuscum Tiberim). Students should be aware of the word play, juxtaposing sŏlum ("soil") to sōl (6: "sun"). From the handwritten manuscripts, we know that this was a deliberate stylistic choice, as Pascoli had previously deliberately written *lūci* in verse 6. An engagement ring was usually given by the fiancé at the day of the betrothal.⁷ A text by Pliny the Elder suggests that the ring was sent rather than given in person at the sponsalia.8 The ancient testimonies do not tell us at which moment a girl started to wear the ring. Most probably, she did so from the moment it was given, though the day of marriage might have been the starting point too. 9 In the latter case, the participle induentem (7) in this poem rather indicates Crepereia's unfulfilled desire to wear the ring for the rest of her life. Pascoli obviously viewed the golden ring with the inscribed name Filetus as Crepereia's anulus pronubus (cf. note 8 on golden engagement rings in Tertullian's testimony).

In the **third strophe** the ablative *vitreā* refers to the noun $aqu\bar{a}$ (9; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 7.759: *vitrea unda*), though the alliterating *vitrea virgo* is an allusion to the girl found in crystal clear water. The term *adiantum* in v. 10 (Greek ἀδίαντον "maiden hair", a plant) is only found with Pliny the Elder (HN 1.21.29–30 [table of contents]: *adiantum*; 21.100: *adianto*;

 $^{^{7}}$ Treggiari 1991: 148–49 on rings. Note that no wedding ring was given at the day of the wedding.

⁸ The only three references to engagement rings in the classical period are Plin. *HN* 33.12 (*etiam nunc sponsae muneris vice ferreus anulus mittitur, isque sine gemma*); Tertullian *Apol.* 6.4 (*cum aurum nulla norat praeter unico digito, quem sponsus oppignerasset pronubo anulo*) and jurist Paulus' opinion (see note 9).

⁹ This seems to be implied by Paul. *dig.* 24.1.36.1 (*Sponsus alienum anulum sponsae muneri misit et post nuptias pro eo suum dedit*): the fiancé who had sent a ring which did not belong to him, replaced this after the wedding.

22.62: aliud adianto miraculum). Pascoli here uses the masculine nominative form, no doubt to avoid a hiatus in the combination adiantum undis. Readers with an interest in botany will raise the objection that no plant can survive in a sarcophagus, eight meters underground. However, the impression of Crepereia's hair (9: comans) looking like foliage might have been created by the seeds of an aquatic plant or filamentous bacteria, which flourished in the water (Ghiselli 2009: 59). Again, this strophe has a Vergilian allusion (Verg. Aen. 1.319: dederatque coman diffundere ventis). One might also point to Pascoli's use of the accusative plural form crinis (12) instead of the more usual crines, creating assonance with undis in line 10.

As a persona, the poet comes to the foreground from the **fourth** strophe on. The idea of Pascoli being an eyewitness is strongly stressed (13-14: oculi videnti/ nunc mihi). The conflicting emotions of grief stemming from the distant past (13-14: antiquis . . . lacrimis, note the strong hyperbaton) and the pain felt at present are beautifully expressed in the oxymoron alioque eundem (15, cf. Hor. Carm. Saec. 10: aliusque et idem). What follows is an enumeration of customs related to the preparation of the Roman wedding ceremony in strophe five. The crown of myrtle (17: *murteum* . . . *sertum*; the hyperbaton aptly circles the verse) refers to the small flower wreath which the girl had in her hands beneath her flame-colored veil (flammeum) and girdle. This wreath could possibly consist of myrtle. 10 The coiffure of parted and plaited hair (18: quosque . . . crinis; again a hyperbaton which circles the verse) is only briefly alluded to, with the Greek accusative and the ending -is rather than -es.¹¹ The clasping of hands (dextrarum iunctio), with thin ears of spelt in the right hand, is the next step mentioned (19–20).¹² This form

¹⁰ Fayer 2005: 498–99. The only source is Festus *De verb. sign.* p. 56 (ed. Lindsay): *Corollam nova nupta de floribus, verbenis herbisque a se lectis sub amiculo ferebat*; p. 375 (ed. Lindsay): *Viere alligare significat, ut hic versus demonstrat: "Iba<nt> malaci viere Veneriam corolla"*, indicating that the bride herself picked the flowers for her wedding crown. Fayer 2017: 112 suggests that "the sacred herbs" were possibly olive or myrtle. While a myrtle crown was known for triumphators (Plin. *HN.* 15.125 and Gel. 5.6.20), some sources do indeed point to the context of lovers. See Tib. 1.3.66 (*Et gerit insigni myrtea serta coma*) about a lover; Ov. *Ars* 2.734 (*Sertaque odoratae myrtea ferte comae*) addressing young people (*grata iuventus*).

¹¹ Treggiari 1991: 163. Pascoli does not further elaborate on details as the *hasta caelibaris* used to plait the hair in six braids, or the fastening of the coiffure with woollen fillets.

¹² Treggiari 1991: 164–65 with the important remark that, though this gesture is commonly mentioned in many contexts in literature, "it is not particularly emphasized in relation to weddings".

of marriage is clearly the archaic *confarreatio*. It is revealing of Pascoli's antiquarian tastes to imagine this form of marriage for a couple from a freedmen milieu in the second century c.e. Though marriage by *confarreatio* did not disappear in imperial times, this form of wedding was of particular interest to Greek and Roman antiquaries, who considered it typical for those performing ancient priesthoods, such as the Flamen Dialis. Surely, people of Crepereia's social group would never have entered *confarreatio* marriage, especially not in the second century c.e.¹³

The funerary gifts are the focal point of the **sixth strophe**. Again, the anaphora of *nota* (21 and 24) emphasizes the poet's acquaintance with the excavation and its findings. The amethyst ring indeed shows a griffin attacking a deer. *Gryphis* is a genitive form of the noun **gryps*. Neither the nominative nor the genitive singular are attested in Latin literature, but had already been reconstructed as such in the Forcellini-lexicon, which Pascoli had at hand. His choice again seems inspired by the desire to avoid a hiatus, which would have occurred when using the genitive *gryphi* of the variant *gryphus*, both attested forms. ¹⁴ In verses 23–24 *Venerique pupa/ nota negata est*, we notice a reference to Pers. 2.70: *Veneri donatae a virgine pupae*. The doll was meant to be given to Venus on the day of the wedding, but Crepereia's untimely death decided otherwise. ¹⁵

The **seventh strophe** is a turning point in the whole of the composition. In a way, the poet has already become Filetus, and the readers are projected back to Roman Antiquity and the celebration of the Lemures. In verse 25, we learn that the main character intends to perform a special rite the day after the funeral, which would have been the 11th of May. This rite was connected to the ancient religious festival of the Lemuria. Traditionally held on May 9th, 11th, and 13th, this festival intended to appease the wandering ghosts and spirits of the deceased.

¹⁵ See Fayer 2005: 223–44 for a full collection of the evidence; Treggiari 1991: 21–24. Only one source refers to the spelt being carried by the brides. See Plin. *HN* 18.10: *quin et in sacris nihil religiosius confarreationis vinculo erat, novaeque nuptae farreum praeferebant.* It is nowhere stated that the brides would have carried the spelt in their right hands, and one presumes a conflation by Pascoli with the gesture of the *dextrarum iunctio*. Ghiselli 2009: 63.

¹⁴ Ghiselli 2009: 63. The ThLL entry, vol. 6.2 (1925–1939) mentions: gryps, gryphis (? nom. et gen. exemplis carent).

¹⁵ Note that the presumption that a beautifully elaborated and expensive doll as found with Crepereia Tryphaena originally was a toy (still suggested by Fayer 2017: 89) is contested by modern researchers, who rather view these dolls in a funerary and religious context. See Dasen 2010 and Dasen 2012.

Remarkably, Pascoli transfers the ritual of the Lemures, which was very much a domestic ceremony, to the public space. 16 Mentioning the Lemuria is a particularly appropriate choice by the poet, since Roman popular belief held that weddings contracted on the days of the Lemuria, and by extension all weddings contracted in the month of May, were deemed to be short.¹⁷ Sacrifices at the Lemuria were sometimes held barefoot (27: nudo pedo; cf. Ov. Fast. 5.432: habent gemini vincula nulla pedes; Serv. in Verg. Aen. 4.158: in sacris nihil solet esse religatum). There is a contrast between the darkness of the night and the multicolored birds and noisy dogs (26-27; cf. Ov. Fast. 5.430: et canis et variae conticuistis aves; Verg. Aen. 4.525: cum tacet omnis ager, pecudes pictaeque volucres). In **strophe eight**, the tossing over the shoulder of black beans and the redemption words which are formulated nine times are again reminiscent of Ovid¹⁸ (cf. also Festus *De verb. sign.* P. 77 ed. Lindsay: quod ea putatur ad mortuos pertinere. Nam et Lemuralibus iacitur lar*vis*—on beans s.v. *fabam*). The expiatory rite continues in **strophe nine**. It was believed that the spirits of the departed followed the performer of the ritual unseen and that they gathered the gifts. In the meantime, the expiator was not supposed to look back (33-34; cf. Ov. Fast. 5.439-440: (. . .) umbra putatur / colligere et nullo terga vidente segui). But what follows in this poem is a reversal of the normal order of the rite. Normally, the performer again touches the water, clashes the Temesan bronze, and asks the shade to go out of his house. When he has said nine times, "Ghost of my fathers, go forth!" he looks back, and thinks that he has duly performed the sacred rites. 19 Here, the poet intends to abstain from clashing the bronze (35) and he will look back (36), knowing that Tryphaena's spirit is still there. All this announces his firm desire to die, as he will be in contact with the dead (35: moriturus).

¹⁶ Note that studies on Roman festivals and religious customs were very popular in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The classic study on the Lemures by Emile Jobé-Duval originally dates from 1924. See now Jobé-Duval 2000. The *locus classicus* on the Lemuria is Ov. *Fast*. 5.429–444, fully explored here by Pascoli. See also Porphyrius *ad. Hor. Ep*. 2.2.209: *umbras vagantes hominum ante diem mortuorum et ideo metuendas*.

¹⁷ Ov. Fast. 5.488–490 (about the Lemuria): tempora: quae nupsit, non diuturna fuit./Hac quoque de causa, si te proverbia tangunt,/mense malas Maio nubere volgus ait.

¹⁸ Ov. Fast. 5.436–439: vertitur et nigras accipit ante fabas, / aversusque iacit; sed dum iacit, 'haec ego mitto, /his' inquit 'redimo meque meosque fabis.' / hoc novies dicit (. . .).

¹⁹ Ov. Fast. 5.441–444: Rursus aquam tangit, Temesaeaque concrepat aera, / et rogat ut tectis exeat umbra suis. / Cum dixit novies 'manes exite paterni'/ respicit, et pure sacra peracta putat.

In the words En ades at the beginning of strophe ten (37), the reader notices an anticipation of what will happen on the following night (25–26: crastina . . . nocte). At the same time, we are confronted with a curious and associative mix of various phases of time. Not only does the poet imagine his beloved actually being there, we are also thrown back to the mourning scene at the deathbed, which must have taken place in Crepereia's parental home. The strophe contains a description of the girl's physical beauty, referring to her depiction on the sarcophagus. Me flente (38) identifies the poet with mourning Filetus, whom Pascoli in all likelihood regarded as the male figure depicted on the sarcophagus at the right side of Crepereia's deathbed. The word order of verse 38 is particularly touching: the words pallidam and habebat embrace the whole verse, which has an intermittent rhythm, expressing the lament and tears of the mourning fiancé. One also notices the resonance of En ades (37) with Sic eras (39). With the juncture nitidum . . . fusa capillum (v. 39-40) Pascoli again reverts to the use of a Greek accusative, similar to verse 18. Recently, the proper translation of the exclamation nefas has been the subject of an extended debate between two eminent Pascolian scholars. Traina (2009) has pointed to the religious dimension which the term always implies, as illustrated by the unjust and untimely death of the young, the so-called *mors immatura*. He therefore proposed the Italian translation o abominio! ("what an abomination!"), which preserves the ominous and sacred connotation. He even considers the term as a key to understanding Pascoli's own feelings about the cruel turns of fate, as the poet himself had witnessed the untimely deaths of both of his parents, some of his brothers, and his sister Margherita.²⁰ Ghiselli (2014), on the contrary, maintains that o crudeltà! ("what a cruelty!") is a better translation, since it also presupposes the cruel turn of fortune. In response, Traina (2014) acknowledged the negative reactions to his translation o abominio! and proposed o iniquità!, since the injustice of gods, fortune, and nature, frequently found in ancient literature, is contained in this term too. My translation "unjust fate" points to a preference for the latter solution proposed by Traina.

Strophe eleven offers us the most difficult and elaborate sentence of the whole composition: *flamen grave tibiarum* (41: "the harsh notes of the flutes"; see Hor. *Carm.* 3.19.9: *cur Berecyntiae cessant flamina*

²⁰ Traina 2009: 128, with references to Pascolian poems on the matter.

tibiae) is to be understood as the subject of pellit, with auris as the object. The participle oblitas gives additional information on auris (41: "which have forgotten these sounds"). I suspect that Pascoli plays with the rather similar form oblitas, from the verb oblinere, which would mean that the ears were smeared or covered. The indirect object is the poet, who is in tears and to whom the sound of the flutes appears far away (42). Verses 43-44 are again an example of Pascoli's preference for antiquarianism, both with the terms praefica (Varro Ling. 7.70: quae praeficeretur ancillis, quemadmodum lamentarentur, praefica est dicta) and more outspokenly lesso, which needs to be understood as a mourning chant. This last one is an archaic word from the Law of the XII-Tables that already caused difficulties for the Roman writers themselves (Cic., Leg. 2.59: 'mulieres genas ne radunto neue lessum funeris ergo habento'. Hoc veteres interpretes, Sex. Aelius, L. Acilius, non satis se intellegere dixerunt, sed suspicari vestimenti aliquod genus funebris, L. Aelius 'lessum' quasi lugubrem eiulationem, ut vox ipsa significat).

From the scene at the deathbed, we now move to the funerary cortège on the 10th of May in **strophe twelve**. In all likelihood, Crepereia was buried the day after her death.²¹ The sadness of the event is beautifully illustrated by the position of *triste* in verse 47, which could point to either the *funus* or the *murmur*. Grief seems to be everywhere, and the predominant u-sounds in verses 45–46 reinforce this impression. The "Etrurian Tiber" (46) reminds us of the "Etruscan soil" of verse 5. The depiction of spring with hedges, bushes and berries is typically Pascolian and characteristic of late-nineteenth-century Italian poetry (Ghiselli 2009: 71). The fact that Roman brides often picked their own flowers for their wedding crown (cf. note 10) adds to the flavor of mentioning herbs.

For **strophe thirteen**, two wedding hymns by Catullus have been the main source. Any reader acquainted with Catullus will recognize the references to the evening star, the young girl departing reluctantly from

²¹ Ancient literature only rarely indicates whether the funeral indeed took place shortly after the moment of death, but comparative anthropological evidence in regions with a same climate leads us to suppose that such was indeed the case. For an Athenian example, see ps.-Dem. 43, Contra Macartatos 62 for one day after. Bonnard, Dasen, Wilgaux 2017: 423–425 on Greek funerals. For Roman funerals, the testimony of Serv. *In Aen*. 5.44–46 pointing to nine days between death and funeral in all likelihood refers to a special case. The famous inscription from Puteoli mentions one day as interval (AE 2011.100 for a survey). See Bonnard, Dasen, Wilgaux 2017: 423–25 on Roman funerals. Vlachou 2012 is a rich overview of Greek funerary practices.

the mother's safe environment, the boys who sing the wedding hymn while they raise torches. However, Pascoli is careful not to mention the more 'violent' details, as the impetuous young man who is eager to take possession of his young bride.²² The offering scene of **strophe fourteen** undoubtedly has a passage from Vergil's Aeneid as its main source of inspiration.²³ Catullus again resonates in "the mute grave" (53: *mutis* . . . sepulcris; cf. Catull. 101.4: mutam . . . cinerem). Have is a current form in grave inscriptions to address the passer-by. Strophe fifteen is again full of learned allusions, elaborate constructions, and references to what came earlier in the poem. Pariis refers to the marble as it was found on the isle of Paros (56: cf. Ov. Pont. 4.8.31–32: Nec tibi de Pario statuam. Germanice, templum / marmore); luteum iubar is "yellowish radiance" (v. 58; cf. Ov. Fast. 1.77-78: flamma nitore suo templorum verberat aurum, / et tremulum summa spargit in aede iubar); the moles Hadriana is the Mausoleum of Hadrian-the common Latin name to denote the building up to the late in nineteenth century, though this name does not occur in any ancient source. With the mention of the herd of ravens (v. 59-60: fugiente corvi agmine), we are reminded of the turba corvorum in verse 3. Vesper occurs in verse 57 and verse 49.

Only in the last word of **strophe sixteen does** the reader receive confirmation of what was suggested from verse 13 on: he poet has become Filetus, Crepereia's mourning fiancé. This last strophe has a clear Lucretian resonance (Lucr. 2.202: *per inane . . . ferantur*). Verse 61 is the only hypermetric verse of the composition, since *-que* elides with the first vocal of *inmemor*.

V. Metrics: Too Often Overlooked

It is a striking feature of the otherwise so thorough commentary by Ghiselli that a metric analysis of Pascoli's Sapphic strophes is almost completely lacking. Those who have ever attempted to write any Latin

²² Catull. 61.56–59: tu fero iuveni in manus / floridam ipse puellulam / dedis a gremio suae / matris, o Hymenaee Hymen, / o Hymen Hymenaee; 61.121–122: tollite, o pueri, faces: / flammeum video venire; 62.1–2: Vesper adest, iuvenes, consurgite: Vesper Olympo / exspectata diu vix tandem lumina tollit; 62.21: Hespere, quis caelo fertur crudelior ignis?/ qui natam possis complexu avellere matris; 62.26: Hespere, quis caelo lucet iucundior ignis?

²⁵ Verg. Aen. 3.66–68: inferimus tepido spumantia cymbia lacte / sanguinis et sacri pateras, animamque sepulcro / condimus et magna supremum voce ciemus.

verse themselves will be well acquainted with the difficulties of fitting the syllables into the meter. Pascoli does not only manage to do so in an impeccable way, he also brings his Latin verses to great stylistic perfection, entirely in line with the tradition of the Sapphic strophe.

With a length of sixteen strophes, the poem is in line with the way Horace makes use of the Sapphic stanza–the Systema Sapphicum minus to put it more correctly consisting of three Sapphic hendecasyllabic verses and one *adonius*.²⁴ The length of Horatian Sapphic Odes varies between two and nineteen strophes. Furthermore, an analysis of the number of syllables in the verse beginnings of the 48 hendecasyllabic lines, reveals the following result:

Combination	Number of occurrences	Percentage
3 + 2	14	29
2 + 3	8	17
1 + 2 + 2	14	29
2 + 1 + 2	6	12
1 + 1 + 3	2	4
3 + 1 + 1	1	2
others	3	6

For classical Latin poetry, the combinations 3 + 2, 2 + 3 and 2 + 1 + 2 are the most frequent. In *Crepereia Tryphaena*, these combinations account for 58 percent. Also the ends of the lines often have combinations with 2 or 3, with notable exceptions in the very last verse 61 (*silentisque*) or in verse 5, where *decimo die te* expresses Crepereia's gradually fading away by illness. With the exception of verses 36 and 52, the *adonii* all reveal a pattern of 3 + 2 or 2 + 3, again according to classical usage. With only eight occurences, elisions are used sparingly throughout the poem, as they were with the classical poets. Only in verse 55, two elisions occur in one single verse, but they serve to express the intermittent rhythm of the last farewell. Pascoli only once has an elision between lines in this poem, between verses 61 and 62. He does allow hiatus or brevis-in-long at the end of the hendecasyllables in verses 55 and 61. In accordance

²⁴ For details, readers are referred to general introductions to Latin meter, as Crusius 1967. Becker 2010 offers a rich amount of bibliographical information on Sapphic strophes in Latin literature.

with Horace, Pascoli only realizes the fourth-element *anceps* as long, while Catullus can have a short syllable here, in the same way as did the Greek lyric poets.²⁵

VI. A Subtle Structure

The structure of the *Crepereia Tryphaena* poem has been studied more than once, and all studies have pointed to the subtle way in which the composition has been worked out.²⁶ Rather than going through the different possibilities again, I would like to expand upon the structure proposed by Ghiselli (2009), which convincingly illustrates Pascoli's ability to transcend and transform time and space, applying a modern poetic technique to a classically styled Latin poem.²⁷

Most striking is the remarkable ring structure. Strophe one is linked to strophe fifteen, as they both refer to the time, place, and atmosphere of the archaeological discovery. The same goes for strophes two and sixteen, which both highlight an event: the funeral of Crepereia and Filetus being dragged away into the cosmos. It takes four strophes (strophes three through six) to describe Crepereia and her funeral belongings, while the description of the nocturnal rite performed by Filetus takes up twice as many (stropes seven through fourteen). In all, eight strophes pertain to the poet as a persona, while Filetus is accorded an equal number of stanzas. Only in the last strophe does the poet confirm what has been building up since strophe five: the poet has actually become Filetus.

The following scheme summarizes the composition:

Strophe 1:	time and place	(1889)	POET	(1)
Strophe 2:	event	(1889)	POET	(1)
Strophe 3–6:	identification	(1889)	POET	(4)
Strophe 7–14:	nocturnal rite	(2nd century c.E.)	FILETUS	(8)
Strophe 15:	time and place	(1889)	POET	(1)
Strophe 16:	event	(1899 and 2nd century c.E.)	POET=FILETUS	(1)

²⁵ In his *Catullocalvus*, in which he imitates Catullus, Pascoli once has a short fourth element in Sapphics: *mens nec ipsa iam meliora de me* (v. 93).

²⁶ Reading through Frioli 1978 and Ghiselli 2009: 80–82, students will easily discover different structure schemes, which have been proposed by various commentators.

²⁷ Pisini 2013 has strongly and eloquently made this point.

VII. Conclusion

In narrating the mournful events following Crepereia's untimely death, Pascoli clearly inserted his own interpretation. To him, the wedding was meant to be a joyful event, witnessed by two people who profoundly loved each other, and who were most likely surrounded by a loving and caring family. His interpretation could have been different. One might as well imagine a young Crepereia Tryphaena being forced to marry a somewhat older partner, who may have been equally reluctant. One could also envision the bride becoming ill some weeks before the wedding, the ensuing contention between the two families due to the wedding possibly being called off, and the potential financial consequences of such a scenario, especially with regards to the wedding dowry. In fact, such scenarios would indeed in part be more plausible, since many Roman marriages were agreed between the parents rather than initiated by the youth themselves. On the other hand, Pascoli's choices were also dictated by the special circumstances for which this poem was composed. Surely, the first readers of the poem—those attending the wedding ceremony on October 18, 1893-would be more sympathetic to the depiction of a young couple in love than to the more ordinary Roman pairing.

In choosing a scenario, Pascoli obviously settled on a nostalgic and sentimental interpretation. He was perfectly entitled to do so. In the end, his scenario is an imaginable and possible one, rooted in his strong belief that we as human beings do share feelings and emotions with people from the past, who are in no way utterly different from us.²⁸ Writing on Roman childhood and youth, Pascoli in no way claimed to be an historian proposing a kind of historical truth. At the same time, his claims and fictional scenarios are for the most part well grounded (with the exception of the *confarreatio* marriage in a freedmen milieu in Rome of the second century c.e.). In her notes accompanying the *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (1953), French novelist and essayist Marguerite Yourcenar expressed her goals as: "Refaire du dedans ce que les archéologues du XIXe siècle ont fait du dehors". She did so with great verve. Although the feelings and emotions she attributed to Emperor Hadrian could never claim to be "the historic truth", her depiction of the emperor's internal

²⁸ For a lucid esssay on the (im)possibility of understanding people from the past, see Harris 2010, who rather pleas for a study of the history of emotions and to whom sympathy is more reachable than empathy.

life and struggles perhaps brings us closer to him than any ancient biographer or modern historian ever did. To Yourcenar, small details were significant indicators to build up a plausible story, hinting at an understanding of a person from the distant past. In the field of ancient history, Keith Hopkins, a scholar particularly concerned about questions of method, has been one of the most persistent exponents of historical empathy in any field.²⁹ In much the same way, Pascoli offers an insight into the possible thoughts, feelings, and emotions of a young Roman couple. Though he cannot and does not claim that his story is the sole interpretation of a set of archaeological data, he brings us closer to a possible scenario of daily life than any enumeration in a scientific catalogue could. At the same time, we as readers have to acknowledge that we read the ancient sources with modern minds. 30 To his depiction of everyday life in Antiquity Pascoli adds the joy of reading a literary masterpiece. For his readers, the double exercise of empathic understanding and literary close reading remains a most worthy enterprise, both from an intellectual and from an aesthetic point of view.³¹

In nigros circum taciturna lucos fugerat cornix, repetebat urbis turba corvorum memorum quadratae saxa Palati,

cum solum Tuscum decimo die te reddidit maio, Crepereia, soli pronubam post innumera induentem saecula gemmam.

Vitrea virgo sub aqua latebas, at comans summis adiantus undis

10

5

²⁹ Harris 2010: 3 about Hopkins 1999 and the many reviews it sparked on the role of fiction in 'serious' historical scholarship.

³⁰ Hopkins 1999: 2: "We have to imagine what Romans, pagans, Jews, and Christians, thought, felt, experienced, believe. But, as with baroque music played on ancient instruments, we listen with twentieth-century ears. We read ancient sources with modern minds".

³¹ I owe the references to Yourcenar to Keith Bradley, whose views will be published as K. Bradley (forthcoming) I take the opportunity of thanking Keith Bradley for such profound knowledge, expressed in a literary superb way. Similar views on plausible and imaginative scenarios for the history of childhood can be found in Laes, Vuolanto 2017, Aasgaard 2017–and many chapters in this volume.

nabat. An nocti dederas opacae spargere crinis ?	
Sed quid antiquis oculi videnti nunc mihi effeti lacrimis madescunt? quas premo curas alioque eundem corde dolorem?	15
Murteum vidi memor ipse sertum quosque fulsisti religata crinis, et manus iunctas tenuisque dextris farris aristas.	20
Nota, post longos amethystos annos quae refert alas oculis ruentis gryphis et cervam, Venerique pupa nota negata est.	
Crastina, sacris Lemurum tenebris, nocte, cum pictae volucres tacebunt et canes, nudo pede per soporam deferar umbram,	25
et fabas sumam iaciamque nigras pone per noctem noviesque dicam "His fabis, manes, redimo, Tryphaenae, meque meosque".	30
Dumque tu aversum sequeris manuque tangis exsangui levis umbra dona, tinnulo parcam moriturus aeri respiciamque.	35
En ades. Sic lectus eburnus olim pallidam, me flente, nefas, habebat. Sic eras, collo nitidum reflexo fusa capillum.	40
Flamen oblitas grave tibiarum nunc procul flenti mihi pellit auris neniaeque urguent resonoque maesta praefica lesso.	

Ducitur funus per aprica ripae, murmur Etrusco Tiberi ciente

45

triste, per sepes ubi gignit albos spina corymbos.

Floridam non te ruber igne Vesper matris abduxit gremio morantem 50 nec faces «Hymen» pueri levantes concinuerunt.

Cymbiis fusis ego rite lactis condidi mutis animam sepulcris edidique amens "Have have" supremum ipse "Tryphaena". 55

Vesper adflavit Pariis columnis luteum molis iubar Hadrianae, Pincium tranant fugiente corvi agmine collem,

cum rapi sensim videor silentisque inmemor cordis per inane ferri, iam tuae frustra revocante matris voce Philetum

The silent crow had returned to the black woods; the crowd of ravens, remembering the quadrangular City, flew back to the Palatine rocks.

60

When on the 10th of May the Etruscan soil gave you, Tryphaena, back to the sun. After so many centuries you still were willing to wear your engagement ring.

A young girl you were hidden in the bright water, but your maiden hair was swimming in the waves of the water as foliage. Or did you agree that the dark night would spread your hair?

But why are my whitered eyes wet with tears from the past when I watch this? What sorrows do I oppress, the same pain in another heart?

I myself have seen, I remember well, the crown of myrtle, and your knotted hair which made you shine, and your hands joined together and the thin ears of spelt in the right hands.

Yes, I know the amethyst which after long years brings to our eyes the wings of the impetous griffin and the dear; I know the puppet which has been refused to Venus.

Tomorrow at night, in the sacred darkness of the feast of the Lemures, when the multicolored birds and the dogs will be silent, I will go barefoot in the sleeping darkness

and I will take the black beans and throw them behind me during the night, and nine times I will say: "With these beans, I redeem the spirit of Tryphaena and of myself and my beloved ones".

While you will follow me, while I look forward, you will touch the gifts with your bloodless hands, as a light shadow. And I, sure that I will die, I will abstain from the bronze, and I will look back.

There you are. In this way, the ivory bed held you, pale as you were, while I was crying, o unjust Fate. So you were, with your neck reclining and your abundantly shining hair.

The far away harsh sound of the flutes now invades my ears, while I am weeping—my ears which have forgotten these sounds. The lament songs and the sad woman hired to lament, with her resounding chant, will press upon me.

The funeral procession now follows the river side, while the Tuscan Tiber brings forth a sad sound, amid the bushes where the thorn bush produces white ivyberries.

The evening star, red by the evening light has not taken you away from the bossom of your mother, while you were hesitating. The wedding boys did not sing wedding hymns, while they raised the torches.

After I have poured forth the bowls of milk I bury your soul in the mute grave and in despair I utter a last "farewell, farewell, Tryphaena".

The evening star softly blew a yellow radiance on the marble colums of the Hadrian palace. The ravens flew over the Pincio hill, in a herd which was fleeing.

While I have the feeling of gradually being taken away, and being dragged through the cosmos, unaware of my own silent heart. At the same moment the voice of your mother cries out for Philetus, in vain.

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