

LAUS ULULAE.
The Praise of Owls.
An ORATION TO THE Conscript Fathers, and Patrons
of OWLS.

Written in LATIN, By CURTIUS JAELE.
[i.e., Conradus Goddaeus (1612-1658)]

Translated By a CANARY BIRD
[i.e., Thomas Foxtan (1697-1769)].

Edited with an Introduction by
Irwin Primer
Professor Emeritus, Rutgers University

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Irwin Primer

INTRODUCTION to the English Translation of *Laus Ululae* (The Praise of Owls, 1727)

The translation presented here, first published in 1726, has been largely unknown to anglophone readers for almost 300 years. The Praise of Owls, is a loose translation of a Latin work named *Laus Ululae*, which, according to the OCLC database, was first published in Amsterdam in 1640 and was later reprinted a few times in the seventeenth century. Because this translation was apparently withdrawn from the market by its publisher, only a few copies have survived. Recently the digitized text of one of those copies became available to all readers connected to the Internet and reprints can be purchased in hardcopy.

Given this easier access to what was until recently a rare text, has anyone rushed to publish the first modern study of this work to appear in English? Apparently not. This neglect may result from a belief that this text is at best minor and inconsequential. On the other hand, how many scholars of eighteenth-century literature knew that this text existed for centuries and is now more easily available? Relatively few, I would guess—a conclusion based on the fact that, at least for readers of English literature, it is rarely mentioned and has never appeared as the subject of any critical essays or books. The same can be said for many other minor works, so a question can be raised regarding this particular choice: why this work?

What led me at first to pursue this old and neglected work was mere curiosity. A few years ago, when I decided to see a copy, I discovered that most of the libraries that claim to own this work really do not. I eventually realized that in order to see a rare 1727 exemplar of this translation, I would have to visit Yale's Beinecke Library. I was unable read the entire book during that visit, but fortunately I was able to order a digital copy of it and that gradually led me to undertake this edition.

One reason for my interest in this work is that it seemed to have some relationship to Alexander Pope's uses of owl imagery. A few scholars have examined Pope's uses of the owl image and its symbolism in various editions of his *Dunciad*, but not one of them has dealt with the owls depicted in the English translation of *Laus Ululae*. Edmund Curll published this work two years before Pope's famous satire appeared in 1728. In their book on Curll (2005), Paul Baines and Pat Rogers briefly mentioned Conradus Goddaeus's *Laus Ululae* and its translator Thomas Foxtan, but to explore that translation in any depth was simply not their aim. Nor have any other anglophone scholars dealt at length with this Neo-Latin work or with its translation. As for the Latin source of this translation, one modern study (1934) by F. Kossmann—published in Dutch, in a Dutch journal—provides bibliographical information about it. Kossmann's essay is apparently our only modern study of Goddaeus's career and works. In what follows I shall offer some details about his ironic encomium, but my main concern will be to explore the English translation of Goddaeus's work, a translation that was not mentioned at all by Kossman.

GENRE: THE PARADOXICAL ENCOMIUM

When I taught courses in Satire, I would usually assign an English translation of Erasmus's masterpiece, his *Laus Stultitiae* or *Moriae Encomium* (1511), commonly rendered as *The Praise of Folly*. In that work Erasmus revived and re-invigorated the genre of the paradoxical

encomium, which was best known in writings by Lucian of Samosata. We identify the genre as the paradoxical encomium, but the writings of this kind are also called the mock encomium, the burlesque encomium, the satirical encomium, and the satirical eulogy. Following the success of Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium*, the genre of the ironic or paradoxical encomium flourished on the Continent and in Britain as never before. Authors who wrote in this genre strove to find new things or creatures to praise ironically. Most often they praised vices of all sorts, various diseases, and many animals ranging from insects to the elephant. Eventually this genre came to include paradoxical encomia on gout, on baldness, on lice, on bats, on fleas, on war, on avarice, on poverty, on mice, on lying, and even on nothing. The full list is much longer. Knowing that this genre was especially popular in the seventeenth century, we will not be surprised to find that a minor author, Conradus Goddaeus, offered his own contribution to it, *Laus Ululae*, which means "the praise of owls." This seventeenth-century work survives today in various editions printed in Latin and in a seventeenth-century translation from the Latin into Dutch. No further reprints of this work, either in Latin or in Dutch translation, appeared after 1700. But in 1726 an English translation (or imitation) of it did appear for sale briefly and then went out of print and became scarce.

We do not know precisely why Conradus Goddaeus (1612-1658), a preacher in the Dutch town of Vaassen since 1636, decided to write his *Laus Ululae*, but he probably knew of the success of Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae* and may have been eager to make his own contribution to the growing body of works in that genre. The idea of praising owls in particular may have appealed to him possibly because no one else had previously attempted it. The most popular literary treatment of an owl that preceded *Laus Ululae* was the collection of humorous tales featuring Till Eulenspiegel, or Till Owl-glass, though there were of course other literary treatments of the owl in biblical, Medieval and Renaissance writings.

After his work on owls Goddaeus also published a volume of poems (1656) and corresponded with P.C. Hooft, one of the better-known Dutch authors of that period, but he never became a major author. He might have remained almost completely unknown today—the fate of most minor Neo-Latin authors—were it not for the English translation that recently became widely available.

The fact that neither the translator nor his publisher ever mentioned the name Goddaeus raises the possibility that neither of them knew the author's identity, but if they did know the author's name, they were not concerned to mention it. Neither of them, however, can be faulted for this reticence or blatant omission because the name Goddaeus is entirely absent from all of the Latin printings of *Laus Ululae*. That seems to have been a choice made by Goddaeus: his identity is deliberately withheld on each title page, even in editions published after 1658, the year of his death. When the English translation first appeared in mid-1726, its readers might well have been mystified by the pseudonym of the author printed on the title page: Curtius Jaele.

ON THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY EDITIONS IN LATIN AND DUTCH:

According to the OCLC, *Laus Ululae* was first published in Amsterdam in 1640. I have never seen a copy of that first edition, but I do have access to the revised and expanded edition that followed in 1642. The only bibliography I have ever seen of early editions of this

Neo-Latin work appears in Kossman's article. Kossmann thought that the first edition of *Laus Ululae* was published in 1642, but the OCLC now reports that it was first published in Amsterdam two years earlier. The OCLC lists printings of the *Laus Ululae* for 1640, 1642, 1643, 1644, 1655, 1658, and 1700. At a certain point this work was published and bound together with Jean Passerat's *Laus Asini*—the praise of asses or donkeys—possibly in the 1640s, but also in 1650, 1665 and 1681. The Latin text of *Laus Ululae* was reprinted, without its footnotes, in a Dutch anthology of paradoxical or mock encomia named *Admiranda rerum admirabilium encomia: sive, Diserta & amoena Pallas differens seria sub ludicra specie, hoc est . . .* (*Noviomagi Batavorum* [i.e., Nimegen], 1666, reprinted 1676). It was not re-issued in Latin after 1700.

A posthumous Dutch translation of Goddaeus's *Laus Ululae* appeared in 1664 with the title *Het Waare Lof des Uyls*. That volume also contains a Dutch translation of Jean Passerat's *Laus Asini* (mentioned above). Both translations into Dutch were published in Amsterdam in 1664 by Samuel Imbrecht and Adam Sneewater.

REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION (1727)

The two volumes of Curll's *Miscellanea*, with the year 1727 printed on their separate title pages, were published in London and sold there and perhaps elsewhere beginning in mid-1726. Volume I contains (1) "Familiar letters written to Henry Cromwell Esq; by Mr. Pope," (2) "Occasional poems by Mr. Pope, Mr. Cromwell, Dean Swift, &c.," and (3) "Letters from Mr. Dryden to a lady, in the year 1699." Volume two always has five separate works listed on its title page as follows: (1) "An Essay on Gibing, with a project for its improvement," (2) "The Praise of Women, Done out of French," (3) "An Essay on the Mischief of Giving Fortunes with Women in Marriage," (4) "Swifteana," and (5) "*Laus Ululae*, The Praise of Owls."

When Curll decided to withdraw the last of these five works, he replaced it with at least three other works, successively. No matter what substitutions might appear in later printings of volume II, the fifth item was always reported on this volume's title page as "*Laus Ululae*." Those other substituted works, as R.H. Griffith informs us in his bibliography of Pope (1922), include "sheets from 'Original poems and translations. By Mr. Hill' 1714 (group v); sheets from Pope's 'Court Poems,' 1726 (group t); and sheets from N. Rowe's 'Poems on several occasions' (group u), with additional leaves (sig. C, pp. 33-42)." Thus it appears that the fifth work in volume II of the *Miscellanea* was initially the translation of *Laus Ululae*, which shows up in Griffith's bibliography of Pope as item no. 178. All of the five works collected in that second volume make up what Griffith called "variant a." The sheets on which the *Laus Ululae* translation is printed are called "group s," and very few copies of that specific variant have survived. About six copies of that variant in the *Miscellanea*, volume II, are listed in the online OCLC. In addition to being published as the fifth work collected in *Miscellanea*, volume II, this translation also existed as a separate stand-alone publication.

We are left with the question of why the translation of *Laus Ululae* was removed. Curll might have learned that it was unreliable, meaning unfaithful to its Latin source—which is true. Or perhaps that work was discovered to be unappealing? Another possibility is that Curll may simply have wanted to reduce his inventory of unbound works. Whatever the cause or causes may have been, he did change his mind fairly soon and began replacing the

translation of *Laus Ululae* with other works. Did he have any knowledge of or forewarning of the kind of owl that was to appear in 1728 in Pope's *Dunciad*? Is that what influenced him to stop publishing "The Praise of Owls"? The answer is a tentative "no," simply because there is no proof to support that hypothesis. For whatever reason, the *Laus Ululae* was removed and it apparently dropped out of sight a year or two before Pope's *Dunciad* appeared in May 1728. We are still drawn to consider the sources of Pope's owl and cannot dismiss the possibility that Pope was reacting to various images of owls and asses in earlier literature and in visual art. Was he aware that Curll had published Foxton's translation, and was he at all reacting to it? Perhaps, but that would need to be verified.

THE TITLE PAGES

The title page of the second edition of *Laus Ululae* [1642] reads as follows:

LAUS | ULULAE | AD | Conscriptos Ululantium | Patres & Patronos. | Authore |
 CURTIO JAELE. | Editio secunda, priori multo auctior | & emendatior. | [Woodcut of an
 owl viewing itself in a mirror] | Prostat | GLAUCOPOLI, | Apud Caesium Nyctimenium:
 | In platea Ulularia, sub signo | ULADISLAI Regis Poloniae. | [n.d., but the date is
 probably 1642].

The notes that follow are intended primarily for anglophone readers, but they may possibly be of interest to classicists also. Translated into English, with some explication, the title page can be read as follows:

THE PRAISE OF OWLS, to the Conscript Fathers [i.e., Roman senators] and Patrons of Owls.

The author's name, Curtio Jaele, seems to be (according to Kossman, p. 240) a pseudonym for Conradus Goddaeus. Curtius = Koert or Conradus, and the surname Jaele consists of two Hebrew words signifying God, namely Jahweh and El. The name Jaele thus "translates" the name Goddaeus, which can be read as God + deus.

The next line informs us that this is the "second edition, much augmented and corrected."

We see below this a woodcut of an owl viewing an image of its face in a mirror, which would remind readers of the popular tales of Till Eulenspiegel, whose very name includes the terms owl and mirror. The published editions of Till Eulenspiegel usually included such a print on their title pages.

Under this image we find the imprint information. "Prostat" can be rendered as "for sale at" or "sold at." The city of publication, Glaucopoli is a fictional invention from Greek roots "glau" (=owl) and "polis" (=city), which combined give us "Owl City." "Apud" (=among) introduces the name of the publisher. "Caesius" renders in Latin the Greek word "glaukos" (meaning "blue-gray"), and the simplest explanation of "Nyctimenium" is that it combines two Greek terms, "nux" (=night) and "mayn" (=moon), possibly signifying "moonlit night." Some readers may recall the character Nyctimene, who is named in Book II of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). She was transformed into an owl for having slept with her father. It is possible that Goddaeus wanted the reader to make that identification, so that every part of

the imprint would be associated with owls. “In platea Ulularia” can be rendered as “owl street,” and “sub signo Uladislai Regis Poloniae” means “under the sign of Ladislus (or Ladislaus), King of Poland.” Many kings with this name appear in European history over the centuries, but this “Uladislai” is probably the Ladislus who lived from 1595 to 1648, becoming king of Poland in 1632, after the death of his father King Sigismund III. (The Wikipedia article on this king gives his name as Wladyslaw IV Vasa.) This king Ladislus (or Wladyslaw) apparently did visit the Netherlands briefly and had his portrait painted by Rubens in Antwerp. Did Goddaeus ever see him or actually meet him? The imprint seems to imply that the image of this Polish King Ladislus appeared on a bookseller’s sign on Owl Street in the city of Glaucopoli. Why did Goddaeus associate the name of this king with the other images, including those of the owl and of Nyctimene, on this problematic title page? Was it a question of a Protestant preacher disliking a Catholic king? At this point we do not know why this Polish King ‘Uladislai’ is mentioned, but, as one scholar has suggested to me, Goddaeus may have used that king’s name, Uladislai, for no weightier reason than that it sounds like the Latin word for owls.

Compared with the various mysteries hiding plain truths on the 1642 title page, the title page of its English translation is fairly straightforward, except for the names of the author, “Curtius Jaelé,” and its translator, “a Canary Bird.” We have already remarked upon “Curtio Jaelé.” As for the “Canary Bird,” I do not know any reason why the name Thomas Foxton needed to be disguised. It seems unlikely that the inventor of this title page wanted his reader to think of a light yellow canary who sang a bird’s song. Nor is there any reason to have associated this work with the Canary Islands. By a process of elimination we arrive at the likeliest connotation: this “canary bird” may delight in imbibing sack (a wine) called “canary.” He may, in fact, be a tippler, and he may be remotely associated with a work previously published by Curll, the *Laus Ebrietatis*, i.e., the praise of drunkenness. Until a more convincing account is offered, such an explication will remain at best an educated guess.

After Foxton’s translation was no longer available as the fifth item in the second volume of *Miscellanea*, it survived in bibliographies and came to be regarded as a rare book. An occasional copy turns up now and then in the sale lists of rare-book dealers. Many libraries worldwide are reported by the OCLC database as possessing a copy of *Miscellanea*, volume II, but more often than not, as I have found, their copies of volume II lack this specific work. Among the few libraries that do own Foxton’s translation of the *Laus Ululae* we can name the Huntington, the Spencer Library at the University of Kansas, the Teerink Collection at the University of Pennsylvania, the Lilly Library at Indiana University, the Beinecke Library at Yale, and the libraries of Trinity College (Hartford), Princeton University, Harvard University, and U.C.L.A. Within the last few years, however, Google Books has added Curll’s *Miscellanea*, vol. II (1727) to their collection online and fortunately the copy they have included in their database does contain Foxton’s translation. Thus a book that was once available in only a few rare-book rooms and through a few rare-book dealers can now be easily accessed by any readers connected to the Internet.

THE CONTENT: IN WHAT WAYS IS THE OWL PRAISED?

Laus Ululae, *The Praise of Owls*, which continues for over one hundred pages in this first and only English translation, has a central message that serves as its superstructure. Basically

that superstructure is Goddaeus's list of the traits and qualities for which the owl is praised, and these are presented to us almost from the beginning. On page iii of his opening note to the "Jocund Reader," the author remarks that the owl is "a Creature formed by Nature for Sport and Pastime." (This might be said of other beings too, but the speaker is not concerned with them here.) Furthermore the owl is the "Favourite and sacred BIRD of Minerva"; it excels all other birds in "Shape and Beauty"; and its appearance brings not disaster—as was commonly thought—but prosperity. The owl's former infamy will vanish as its virtues come to be known and admired ("Preface," pp. i-ii). But readers already familiar with some paradoxical encomia will also suspect the presence of irony in almost every page of this work, and they are right to do so.

Early in the main body of this work the encomium focuses upon the owl's name and the origins of *ulula*, a name bestowed upon the owl "with great care and judgment" (p. 6). In fact, the owl "makes considerable approaches to human nature" by imitating "the voice and lamentation" of men. In this section the author speculates upon how the owl obtained his name, and he then discusses the sound of the owl's voice, the phenomenon of echoes, and various interpretations of the word or name *ulula*. All of this leads us to his anticlimactic conclusion that "the OWL is a very fine bird, and a great ornament to all his winged fraternity." This is indeed speaking tongue-in-cheek, with a broad smile from the author telling us that though we may learn certain things about owls that we did not know previously, the main goal of such a work is to please and entertain us.

The author next conducts us to his particular owl, the *noctua*, which is Athena's owl. In later centuries it was also called the Little Owl. It soon becomes evident that this essay was designed not only to praise owls, as announced in the work's title, but also to praise a particular variety of these night flyers called *noctua*. We discover early in this work that, in addition to praising owls, the speaker is often busy with description, examining the owls' physical features and their habits and behavior, usually through passages found in classical authors such as Aristotle, Pliny the Elder, Aelian and others. The information culled from these authors had been circulating for centuries. What makes this essay different from other writings on the owl is the fact that the speaker's stated purpose is to praise the owl, which, in the folkloric and public imagination, had generally been regarded as a bird of ill omen.

Early in this work, Goddaeus reminds us that Athena prized the owl above all of the other birds (p. 12). The owl is praised for having gray eyes (*glauk-ops*), like Athena and like Caesar. Having gray eyes, it cannot see well in daylight—a detail that our author uses to amplify the owl's value or stature by associating him with famous persons like Tiberius Caesar and the two Scaligers, all of whom reportedly had superior night vision (pp. 15-16). From this point onward the author mentions many famous persons and authorities who, merely by being associated with the owl, confer honor and praise upon it.

The owl, we learn, not only can fly in the darkness of night, but can also sing in the dark, like Philomel the nightingale. Later, however, the speaker notes that a major virtue of the owl is its silence. The translator Foxtton probably had his English readers in mind when he took this occasion to alter Goddaeus's text by quoting the famous passage on the nightingale from Milton's "Il Penseroso." This alteration is significant because here Goddaeus's work is made to include a quotation written in English and by an English author. But the Neo-Latin editions of this work published in the seventeenth century contain no references to English

authors and no quotations from their works. Foxton's loose translation, on the other hand, includes at least half a dozen quotations from English works. Introducing these lines penned by English writers was a major adaptation of the Latin text. Unfortunately we do not know whether any eighteenth-century English readers were pleased by these alterations.

The next topic in this translation is place. The "native Soil" of this bird may be Athens, but the speaker ignores that limitation when he claims that the owl appears worldwide. By various means Goddaeus manages to import passages from the works of Homer, Socrates, Diogenes the Cynic, Augustus Caesar and Pliny the Elder into his discussion of the owl's homeland. Foxton took the liberty of adding to this group a passage about Hannibal crossing the Alps that occurs in Nat Lee's play *Sophonisba: or Hannibal's Overthrow* (1675). Some lines spoken by Hannibal in that play vividly describe what it felt like for him and his army to cross the Alps. The owl, on the other hand, sensibly avoids the snowy Alps in order to inhabit a warmer climate, "and in this he shows an exquisite Judgement" (p. 22). Even though we are told that the owl is not confined to a particular region but is really found worldwide, Goddaeus nevertheless focuses on the city of Athens and writes that "Here it was . . . that the OWLS fixed their certain and imperial Seats" (pp. 23-24). Then, after praising the owls for their connection with Athens, the author seizes that moment to praise not only the owl but Athens itself. That discussion leads to Athenian coinage, for the image of the owl is stamped on one side of a famous Athenian coin while an image of Minerva dignifies the reverse side.

From the owls' Athenian connection the author somewhat abruptly sweeps us back to the biblical books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, which report that God "drove out the Babylonians from their seat and introduced troops of owls into their kingdom, to whom he gave the habitations of men: so great a monarchy was transferred from men to owls!" (Pp. 25-26) Goddaeus was apparently enjoying his exaggeration. From Babylonia the author speeds up his history by summarizing the *translatio imperii*, the familiar progression of empire from East to West: the Chaldeans, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans and thereafter the entire world—so that the owls (once again) are now found everywhere.

From the "Country, Habitation, and peculiar City" of the owl (p. 26) the speaker moves on to the owl's origin and generation. The Book of Genesis supports the view that the owls and other creatures emerged either from the water or from the earth (p. 28). Discourse on the origins of the owl will sooner or later lead to the owl's egg. The owl, Goddaeus asserts, "was before the Egg" (p. 29), but all owls that followed were born from their eggs. Unlike most other creatures hatched from eggs, the owl emerges from its egg tail first, thus pointing to its contrariness, which is an odd observation in a work designed to praise the owl. The owl's eggs, according to Philostratus, can be useful when, consumed by children, they prevent drunkenness; or when, given to adults, they deflect or remove the drunkard's desire for inebriating spirits. The general drift here is that temperance and sobriety are praiseworthy while inebriation is not—which we would expect any clergyman to affirm.

The author at this point shifts to another subject by noting that even while all owls are born from eggs, there are nevertheless different kinds of owls, some of which are nobler than others (p. 31). The first owl listed here is the *Otis*, also called the *Asio* (p. 32). The series continues with the *Aluco* (p. 33) which is subdivided into the *Aluco Major* and the lesser *Aluco* (p. 35). In the third category, descending in nobility, we find the *Nycticorax*, which

some call “the Night-Raven” though it is not a raven at all but in the owl family. Fourth in this descending list are all other owls, followed by a fifth category, would-be owls, that is, birds that do not really belong to this group (p. 37). Among those falsely regarded as being owls are (sixth in order) the Screech Owls, described as being “clamorous, bold, cruel . . . and dangerous to Women lately delivered . . .” (p. 38). The seventh in this list, also excluded from the ranks of true owls, is the Bubo, a nasty bird that also flies abroad at night (p. 41 ff.). This might have served in the seventeenth century but for us today this short list can hardly pretend to be a scientific survey of the world’s variety of owls. It is not even an accurate account of the owls that Goddaeus had already mentioned in his book, for the simple reason that his list does not include Athena’s owl, the Noctua, the bird that occupies the center of attention from the very beginning of this work.

After examining different types of owls, including some birds that are called owls but really are not, Goddaeus moves on to the owl’s physical constitution (p. 44). We may feel somewhat cheated in this section because the author does not really examine the wings, the claws, the beak etc. but praises the owl’s sharp mind and his sense of smell. Surely there is more to the owl’s body or constitution than that? No matter; Goddaeus then announces the beginning of another major section, his survey of the virtues of the owl (pp. 52 ff.).

The first “virtue” that he associates with the owl is its propensity to religion: the owl “has a considerable Notion of Religion in that he loves and frequents Temples and sacred Places.” And what does the owl do in those places? “He” devours the mice! In this work the reader does not expect to come upon a discussion of the sacrament of Holy Communion and considerations of the Host and the body of Christ, but that is what we find when Goddaeus holds forth upon the owl and religion. The next virtue, the second in this series, is Fortitude (pp. 55 ff.), which brings us to the subject of the perpetual warfare between the owl and the raven and also to other enemies of the owl such as the horse-leech and lice. The third virtue ascribed to the owl is his patience (pp. 64 ff.), a virtue that rarely co-exists with fortitude in the same creature. Examples of the owl’s patience lead to other instances of owl-like behavior in human beings even of the highest rank, including the Emperor Claudius, and in doting husbands who approve of their wives’ open infidelity. In such passages the author deliberately forgets that he is praising the owl but instead uses the owl the way Erasmus used Folly, namely, to imply that we are all owl-like when we behave ignominiously or in a cowardly manner. Erasmus, of course, implied that we are all fools.

The fourth of the owl’s virtues is constancy. While most birds seek a warmer clime in winter, the owl, according to Pliny the Elder, hibernates where he is. Again, it is not the announcement of the owl’s constancy that intrigues the reader, but the unexpected illustrations that are supplied, usually with some satiric or comedic intent. The various details of this work’s primary structure are hardly exciting, but what brings interest and surprise to this progression of virtues is the string of quotations, proverbs, allusions, syllogisms and fables that Goddaeus dredged up from classical and biblical writings and tacked onto the main structure in an order that is completely unpredictable. We might describe all of these external materials, often loosely connected to the essay’s framework, as forms of ornamentation and embellishment.

From constancy the author moves to the fifth virtue he finds in owls, namely, temperance (pp. 73 ff.). In this section the author sounds more like a philosopher or preacher inveighing

against strong drink and drinking contests and drunkenness. The upshot of this survey of the owl's virtues is that the owl meets the requirements that Aristotle thought necessary to produce a virtuous man (p. 78). Another of the owl's virtues—the sixth—lies in his usefulness to human beings, particularly in his destruction of mice which, over the centuries, have been dangerous and deadly to mankind. The author had previously connected the owl's destruction of mice with the owl's religion, but now that destructive activity is also used to support the owl's utility to mankind. The seventh of the owl's virtues is friendship, an assertion based on the claim that we never hear of owls battling against owls although human beings and other creatures frequently display such reprehensible behavior within their own groups (pp. 83 ff.).

Toward the end of his survey of the owl's virtues the author praises the owl for his silence. Many in the animal kingdom, especially the nightingale, are notable for the sounds that they emit, but that excludes the owl. The author therefore seizes upon the owl's lack of a distinctive or identifying sound and elevates that lack into a crowning virtue. The reader at this point probably wonders why the author ignores the hooting of the owl, but the owl's hooting is simply overlooked. The owl, notes the speaker, "may well be deemed a great example of Taciturnity, and therefore I shall now cease" (p. 85). But does he cease speaking? No, the speaker holds forth for at least another fifteen pages. He now seems to lecture or preach to the reader once more on the temperance of the owl, and then introduces the virtue of chastity which he illustrates by denouncing its related vices, lust and incontinence, particularly among the Cynics and among sailors and soldiers.

Quite abruptly the speaker bids farewell to the evils of venery and returns to the subject of the owl's utility, this time focusing on the owl not as a hunter of mice but as a hunter of bats. Here he tells us how harmful bats can be to human beings, even to the point of consuming human flesh. We next see the owl being employed by the fowler as a decoy, luring other birds to their deaths. Does that also illustrate the usefulness of the owl to human beings? Perhaps. But in that function the owl, by attracting other birds, serves as a lure and is rewarded by the fowler for helping to snare other birds. At this point, is the author really praising the owl? Does a traitorous owl that lures other birds into being ensnared by the fowler deserve any praise at all? The situation is ambiguous in that the owl employed as a decoy is indeed betraying other birds, but may be doing so unwillingly, as a captive. Thus it can hardly be claimed, as we find here, that the owl tries to be beneficial or useful to human beings.

The next example of the owls' utility to human beings lies in the medicinal value of the owls' tears which, when applied to a person's eyes, enable that person to see in the dark (p. 90). The owls, furthermore, are useful to us not only when they are alive, but also in death. One might think that the author may be about to recommend the owl's flesh, stewed or roasted, for human consumption, but we are not owl eaters. Instead, what is praised in the dead owl is the usefulness of its wing or foot, hung up and displayed in a granary, as a means for deterring pigeons from eating the grain! Thus the owl, dead or alive, is useful to humankind.

Now surely this list of the owl's virtues, especially its utility, has come to an end? Not yet! For the speaker insists that even if men have noble blood, are very wise, and "of the most unblemished Probity," yet the brightness of their characters will be sullied if they lack

“Pleasantness of Conversation.” This enables the speaker to dwell upon the example of Cato the Censor, who was anything but pleasant. The speaker then reviews the features of the owl’s body, praising the owl’s beauty under the general heading of its pleasantness, and it is that quality which the speaker next finds in the many depictions of the owl in illustrations, in architectural ornaments, in sculptures, and in embroidery. Nearing the conclusion we learn that the owl is “very full of Compliments, and much given to dancing” (p. 97). Dancing, which is introduced with implied approval, becomes another peg on which to drape classical allusions, this time from Hesiod, Anacreon and Homer. He includes Cicero in this series, but a diligent or informed reader will know, or will soon learn, that Cicero apparently did not approve of sober people dancing.

“Thus have I given the Extraction, the Nobility, the Wit, the Vertue, the Usefulness, and Pleasantness of the OWL . . .” (p. 98), and the only matter remaining concerns the owl’s death and burial. Instead of dignifying the owl’s departed soul with a Christian or a Platonic afterlife, our author supplies Hadrian’s famous lament to his departing soul, “Animula, Vagula, Blandula [etc.]” (p. 99). Before concluding with a request for applause from his implied audience, the “conscript Fathers” and the patrons of owls, the speaker remarks that the owl is fortunate in having a shorter life-span than some other birds, and that he therefore will be spared the miseries of surviving into years of pain and debility. As the work draws to an end we are asked to remember the owl’s various virtues, and to “rescue him from all Contempt.” (101).

CONTEXTS of TRANSLATION

Regarding Foxton’s translation, we have already indicated that it is not faithful to its Latin source, nor does it pretend to be that. In many passages it is closer to being an imitation than it is to being a careful transmission of all of the words and sentences of its source. Another indicator of the liberties that Foxton took appears in his footnotes. A simple count reveals that while the translation contains 125 footnotes, the number of footnotes in a 1642 copy of Goddaeus’s Latin text is 218, considerably more than appear in the translation. As with the footnotes, the translator also altered or eliminated much other material that he found in the Latin original. Thus the translation, though sometimes close or faithful to its source, also contains much material that Goddaeus had never seen and some that first appeared even after he was no longer alive. To ask whether Foxton’s is a “good” translation is therefore almost pointless, if by a good translation we mean one that reproduces the words and meanings of the original text; which is not the case here. Instead, the modern reader comes to understand that when the translator was faced with the task of translating the quotations, he chose to deliver those quotations in their original languages, meaning mostly the original quotations from Latin works with some passages in Greek. In some instances, as when we are given the full text of the Emperor Hadrian’s famous verses beginning with “Animula, vagula, blandula,” we find that Foxton provided an English translation of more lines from that poem than appear in Goddaeus’s Latin text.

The translation turns out to be “unfaithful” in various ways: the number of footnotes has been slashed; the length of the entire work has been reduced to about half; and the translator has attempted to anglicize the original Neo-Latin text by naming and quoting from at least a half-dozen English authors, all of whom were probably unknown to Goddaeus. It is impossible to know whether Goddaeus would have objected strongly to such mistreatment

of his original text, or whether he would have accepted such alterations as the price one had to pay for the survival and expansion of one's literary reputation.

OTHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION OF LAUS ULULAE.

After conducting an extensive search for appreciations, evaluations, analyses, or any treatments or critiques of Foxton's translation, I have failed to find a single instance of such a published critical work in English. Is that a sign of the work's insipidness or inferiority? Some may think so, but on the other hand this lack of any criticism in English may be a sign of its rarity. Some scholars know that this work exists, but how many have taken the trouble to read it? Very few, I think. I do not mean to suggest that we have no critical work at all on Goddaeus and his oration on owls. If one can read Dutch, then he or she can learn directly what F. Kossmann wrote about Goddaeus in his 1934 bio-bibliographical essay, "Conradus Goddaeus en zijn Laus Ululae." A search of Google's Dutch website produces more than a dozen hits devoted to the life and works of Goddaeus, usually in Dutch and also quite repetitious. But about Foxton's English translation these websites tell us nothing. Thus far Kossmann may have been the only writer to examine at some length the life and writings of Goddaeus. Curiously Kossmann seems not to have known of the 1640 imprint of *Laus Ululae* (as reported by the OCLC), for in his own bibliographical survey he lists 1642 as the earliest year in which that work was published.

Discussions of *The Praise of Owls* in English have always been brief. It was mentioned in some nineteenth-century works, notably C.H. Herford's still useful book (1886). Henry Knight Miller named it briefly in his influential 1956 essay surveying the genre of the paradoxical encomium. Though Curll's *Miscellanea*, vol. 2 (1727) is listed in volume 2 of the NCBEL (1971), that bibliography seems not to name Goddaeus or Foxton or *Laus Ululae* at all. In her excellent study *The Smile of Truth: The French Satirical Eulogy and Its Antecedents* (Princeton University Press, 1990), which deals at length with French paradoxical encomia, Annette Tomarken mentions a few titles that contain the *Laus Ululae* but she does not dwell on that work; nor does she mention Foxton's translation. However, given her announced subject, there was no compelling reason for her to mention him at all.

Now that this translation is widely available, it may well spark some discussion or commentary regarding a rediscovered work, but the key question is probably that concerning its aesthetic value: how good is it as a work of literature? Does it deserve to be dismissed as simply another piece of hack writing produced in Curll's infamous "Literatory" ("a sweatshop," as one reviewer notes, "for the production of worthless literary commodities")? It is very easy to dismiss this work if one is so inclined, together with thousands of other mediocre pieces, many of which appeared in periodicals. Indeed, this translation does show some of the characteristics of hack writing. On the other hand, we are lucky to have it because of its many connections to literary history. Its main importance for literary history probably lies in the fact that it is clearly a paradoxical encomium. By the eighteenth century that genre had declined in popularity and was no longer favored by authors as a vehicle to convey their thoughts or ideas. The main exception, of course, was Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, which continued to be reprinted well after the popularity of that genre had diminished. Readers who knew Erasmus's masterpiece were better prepared to understand Goddaeus's encomium of owls.

Related to the issues of this work's literary value and its connections in literary history is the question of whether it is worth "saving" at all. Our positive answer to that question is implied throughout this edition. If reviving this work depended solely upon its literary excellence, then it might well have been left undisturbed on the library shelves.

Resuscitations such as this one rarely occur only because a dormant work has now been found to reveal signs of genius or literary excellence. In this case, the revival of a little-known work is at least partly an act of literary archaeology, in which the remains of the literary past are exhumed. That literary past, housed in libraries worldwide, will never be entirely revived, nor should it be. But in this instance we are considering a work that is both curious and interesting, and not literally new but new in the sense of having had only a marginal existence or presence in previous discussions of anglophone literary history.

Neither Goddaeus's praise of owls nor its translation into English ever earned the fame that *The Praise of Folly* had garnered. If it had not been translated at all then it would have survived today only as another little-known Neo-Latin composition. Are we fortunate to have the published translation of this work? Yes. But should we also recommend that this work be more widely known and studied? Our response to that question leaves room for many differences of opinion. What can one make of a work that has been salvaged, so to speak, and that has never been the subject of any extended study in English? If one is prejudiced in favor of Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Newton and/or the Scientific Revolution, then this paradoxical encomium of owls may seem to be no better than most ephemeral writings that have little or nothing to say about new trends in scientific investigation. But those who want to know as much as possible about the formerly popular paradoxical encomia will be glad to have anything "new" relating to that genre.

We are dealing not with another *Tom Jones* or *Gulliver's Travels* or *Robinson Crusoe* or *Clarissa*, but with an unexpected survival from the mid-seventeenth century that has simply refused to disappear. That it failed to elicit any critical responses in English was possibly owing to the fact that it did not circulate widely and disappeared from view fairly quickly. We may be pleased that it is here exhumed, but we do not expect to witness a major revival. This raises once more the question of which works deserve our attention. Some who still cherish the "Great Tradition" will politely set this work aside and perhaps will conclude that "this won't do." Does a Shakespearean scholar or a Miltonist have the time to meddle with it? Perhaps not. The Dutch, so far as one can tell, do not highly prize the writings of their countryman Goddaeus. But those concerned with the works of Desiderius Erasmus will be interested in preserving and expanding the range of his influence, which in this case also includes Goddaeus's ironic praise of the owl. We can also predict that Foxton's translation will have a certain appeal to those who study early modern satire and Renaissance paradox in general, and also to those who study the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century reception of Dutch writings among British writers and readers. We have at least two articles on Swift and the Dutch, but neither one mentions Goddaeus or the translation that is here edited.

Any text that is saved from oblivion and is made available to modern readers will probably generate some interest—but for how long and to what extent we do not know. And some who are convinced that this translation is worth saving may also wish to see its Latin source revived. That could happen, but if it does, that Latin work will likely appeal to fewer readers than would its translation into English. Readers who think this work merits more attention may wish to explore the implications of its Dutch origin on its survival beyond the

seventeenth century. To study this work in greater detail, more needs to be said in explaining Goddaeus's views on owl lore in both the Old and the New Testament, in the Classical tradition, and beyond. Some may want to understand this work better in the contexts of the paradoxical encomium, proverb lore, and the most common collections of fables. Will this work ever become the subject of a dissertation and possibly a book? That remains to be seen.

NOTES

1. See especially the fine essay by Alan T. McKenzie, "The Solemn Owl and the Laden Ass: The Iconography of the Frontispieces to *The Dunciad*." *Harvard Library Bulletin*, Vol. 24 (1976): 25-39.
2. Annette Tomarken, *The Smile of Truth: The French Satirical Eulogy and Its Antecedents*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 7.
3. The OCLC lists only one copy of this work, which is recorded in the catalogue of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and it gives the following fuller title: *Het waare lof des uyls, Aan alle haare ingeschreeve Uylagtige Heeren, en Liefhebbers : Door Koertje Juyle, Te Glaskou, by Graauaardt Nagtenrijk, in de Uyle-straat, in Uyladislai, Kooninck van Poolen : En Het waare Lof des Ezels*. By Jan Passeraat. Amsterdam : Samuel Imbrecht and Adam Sneewater, Booksellers, 1664.
4. An image of the title page of *Miscellanea*, the second volume (1727), can be found in Google Books.
5. See Griffith, vol. I, pp. 135-136. See also *A Bibliography of the Writings of Jonathan Swift*, by Herman Teerink, 2nd ed., revised by Arthur H. Scouten (Philadelphia, 1965), pp. 133-134.
6. Goddaeus's further reference to this tale in Ovid can be found on p. 14 of his text, transcribed below.
7. Thanks to Dana F. Sutton for this suggestion.
8. See *Het Boek*, 22 [1934]: 231-256.
9. Thomas Keymer, "Roger in Merryland," a review of *Edmund Curll, Bookseller* by Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, in *London Review of Books* vol. 29, no. 24 (13 Dec. 2007): 32-33.