

GB Folengo: Samples with Captions (and Utilitarian Translations)

Passages are from the works of Giovanni Battista Folengo (1490-1559). His four core publications, some 2,000 pages, may be cited briefly as: *Pomiliones* [1533], *Psalms* [1543], *John* [1546 and 1555], *James and Peter* [1555]. For more information on the editions, please see <https://verbalmask.hcommons.org/>.

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The massive *Commentary on the Psalms*, and the subsequent commentaries on the *Epistles* of John, James and Peter exemplify parody, a “comic refunctioning” of biblical commentaries and the scriptures on which these are based, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*, Margaret A. Rose (Cambridge, 1993), p. 52. These texts “confuse the normal processes of communication by offering more than one message to be decoded,” (Rose, p. 87). Essential for deciphering the erotic aspect of the message is the analysis of the lexicon by Jean Toscan, *Le carnaval du langage: le lexique érotique des poètes de l'équivoque de Burchiello à Marino* (Lille, Presses Universitaires 1978, 1981); helpful is *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* by J.N. Adams (Baltimore, John Hopkins, 1982); see also glossaries based on these texts under Erotic Lexicon on this site.

1. The author speaks up for fellow monks who are not fed enough to sing loudly.

Psalms {pdf 260, p. 122}

{33.3} Bene psallite illi in vociferatione.

Nollem profecto hinc argumentum sumere psallentium choris praefectos, perinde ac si tota psallendi uis ac summa, in uoce forti & ualida potissimum consisteret: alioqui tenuissimae uocis homines, ut sunt plerique mei instituti homines, ob rationem uictus, ac parsimoniam, a tam laudabili munere laudandi Deum excluderentur.

Certainly I would not wish leaders from the choirs of singers to take up this theme, as if the whole force and most important point of singing, consisted chiefly in a strong and powerful voice: otherwise, men of a very feeble voice, as are most men of my institution, would be excluded from such a praiseworthy gift of praising God, on account of their diet and frugality/ way of life and parsimony.

Follow-up: one could explore the meanings of to sing, and/ or of vociferation: in the same paragraph, the author explains:

Vociferationem enim hic uocat uates decentem illam (ut sic dicam) oris gesticulationem, quae ex eo fit atque oritur, cum mens adeo plene afficitur gaudio, ut se continere uix possit, quin in uocem aliquam intestini sui gaudii testem erumpat. Proinde alio in psalmo sic canit uates: Tunc repletum est gaudio os nostrum, et lingua nostra exultatione. quanquam tamen Fel. non uociferationem, sed iubilationem simpliciter transtulit: alius uero clangorem. quod quidem totum sic reddit. Paraphrastes: Operam

date ut quamoptime cantetis, et cum animi alacritate.

For here the bard calls vociferation that fitting (as I might say) gesticulation of the mouth, which comes about and arises from it when the mind is affected by joy so fully that it can scarcely contain itself, that it might not burst forth into some sort of sound as a witness of its own internal joy. Accordingly, in another psalm, the bard sings thus: Then our mouth is filled with joy, and our tongue with exultation. Still though, Felix [Pratensis] translated not vociferation but simply jubilation, but another [commentator] [translated] clamor. The whole of which indeed Paraphrastes [Johan Campensis] renders thus: Make an effort so that you sing as well as possible, and with alacrity of the spirit.

One could look further into the terminology for sound, which expands beyond vociferation:

Psalms {pdf 445, p. 214v}

Felix: Vlulabo mouens me huc & illuc, in meditatione doloris mei. Dictionem quippe illam, quam nos legimus contristatus, Hebraeis uox est summae consternationis animi, dolorisque immensis testis. Prae dolore, inquit Campensis, moueo me nunc huc nunc illuc, & inter orandum conturbor. Factus est, inquit scriba ille, in agonia prolixius orans.

For Felix [writes] thus: I howl moving myself hither and thither, upon meditation of my pain. Of course, that utterance which we read “saddened,” in Hebrew is a word of the greatest consternation of the spirit, and a witness to immense pain [**dolorisque immensis testis**]. Because of pain, Campensis says, I move myself now here now there and, praying at intervals, I am flung into confusion. He has been made more prolix/ ample, says that scribe, by praying in a struggle.*

*better translation sought

2. Better a blatant heretic than a hypocrite.

Psalms {pdf 777, p. 380v}

{119.15} In mandatis tuis exercebor, & considerabo vias tuas.

Quod enim secundum Dei legem quis uiuere possit, frequens id agit exercitatio, atque assidua in illius doctrina meditatio. Secus enim nulla in terris certa esset de Deo notitia. Nam a lege, Dei uoluntas intelligitur. Quid si intellecta spernitur? Scelus id uidetur inexpiable. Spernitur tamen etiam ab his interdum, qui illius profitentur cognitionem, ac religionis effigiem. Obsecro, unde is uanissimus coelestium donorum usus? Puto equidem ab infecto mundi amore animo, fideique debilitate, ne dicam absentia, originem habere. Qui ita affecti sunt homines, in diuulganda Dei lege exercentur quidem, sed ad quaestum, ad gloriam ad uulgi plausum: uiasque domini considerant, non quo illas terant, atque in salutis sibi usum uertant, sed ut inde nomen sibi comparent, aut illas prorsus diruant: quod proprium haereticorum est, atque illorum

affinium hypocritarum. **Quanquam certe malle[m] patentem haereticum in domo Dei tolerari, quam hypocritam, qui suavissimo suo illo existimationis propriae ueneno imbutus, quicquid agit, quicquid**

{pdf 778, p. 381}

-quid turpissimo commentatur animo, id totum in suum pertrahit colorem, tetrum nimirum, fucatum, pallidum, horrendum, exitialem, odiosum, Deoque infensum, tantum abest ut quod sequitur illi probetur.

For as far as someone being able to live according to the law of God, frequent exercise does that and assiduous meditation on the teaching of that. Otherwise [secus] in fact there would be no reliable fame concerning God on earth. For by law, the will of God is understood. What if once understood, it is scorned? Yet it is sometimes scorned even by those who profess knowledge of that [law], and an image/ model of religion....

Although certainly I would prefer a patent heretic be tolerated in the house of God, rather than a hypocrite, who, imbued with that extremely sweet poison of his own self-estimation, whatever he does, whatever he ruminates in that most shameful mind of his, he drags all of it into his own façade, foul to be sure, dyed, lurid, horrid, deadly, hateful, hostile to God: it is far from the case that what follows is approved by him.*

3. Bones

Psalms {pdf 242, p. 113}	{pdf 242, p. 113}
{31.11} Infirmata est (inquit) in paupertate virtus mea et ossa mea conturbata sunt.	{31.11} ... my virtue is weakened through poverty and my bones are disturbed.
Ex hebraeo: Infirmata est in iniquitate fortitudo mea. vel ut legit Felix: in delicto meo corrui[m] virtus mea. Utrunq[ue] enim filio Dei conuenit, qui in hoc loco innocentissimi sui corporis defectionem, ac lassitudinem, paupertatem uocat, ob cuius languorem omne animi robur infirmatum dicit. Corruit, inquit, in delicto meo uirtus mea.	From the Hebrew: My fortitude has been weakened in my iniquity. Or as Felix reads: in my crime my virtue topples. For whether it is fitting for the son of God, who, in this passage calls the deficiency and lassitude of his most innocent body, poverty, on account of its languor: all strength of the soul, he says, is weakened. My virtue, he says, topples in my crime.

<p>Vide amantissimi nostri bonitatem, qui mortalium delicta, propter quae ab innocentia illa, qua pares angelis conditi fuerant, in abominabiles uitiorum sordes, turpitudinemque corruerant, sua asserat, atque in ipsis ferendis, delendisque, uim</p>	<p>See the goodness of our most beloved, who asserts as his own the crimes of mortals, on account of which, from that innocence with which they had been fashioned equal to angels, had fallen into abominable baseness and turpitude, his own [crimes], and in relating these things and expunging [them],* the spirit complains</p>
<p>{pdf 243, p. 113v}</p>	<p>{pdf 243, p. 113v}</p>
<p>omnem spiritus elanguisse expostulet. Ego, inquit, qui peccatum non feci, sub alienorum peccatorum onere coactus sum cadere: quae tamen mea esse uolui, cum pro ipsis reus factus emori decreui. Peccata nostra alio quoque in psalmo sua uocat, dicens: Longe a salute mea uerba delictorum meorum.</p>	<p>all vigor has languished. I, he says, who did not commit sin, have been coerced to fall under the burden of others' sins, which still I wished had been mine, when I resolved to die having been made guilty on their behalf. Our sins too, he calls his own in another psalm as well, saying: Far from my salvation are the words of my crimes/ sins.</p>
<p>Ossa porro sua turbata memorat, quo uel ipsis rebus inanimis occasionem praebeat considerandi, cuius ponderis sarcina illa extiterit, quae non solum intestina omnia perturbationibus eiusmodi obnoxia commouerit, ac plane concusserit, sed & ipsa quoque ossa, alioqui dura, atque inertia, conturbauerit. Non raro enim istuc obuenit, ut ex uehementi perturbatione permoto spiritu, ossa quoque ipsa tremant, nulliusque uirtutis sint. Quare in nonnullis morientibus id moris esse conspicimus, quod lachrymabilem quendam in modum contremiscunt, horribiliterque distenduntur prae angustia & agonia. Deficiente enim uitali succo atque humore, tum ossa, tum caeterae corporis partes, utpote suo pastu destitutae, uim suam amittunt: idcirco contabescunt ac dissoluuntur, ex qua quidem re tremor ac debilitas oriri solet. Caeterum ossa in</p>	<p>Again he mentions his troubled bones, whereby he actually offers an occasion for considering these inanimate things themselves, whose well-known load of weight stood out, which excited not only all the innards liable to perturbations of that sort, and shook them thoroughly, but also disturbed the bones themselves, in other respects hard and inert. For not rarely it happens to that thing, as a result of vehement perturbations from a deeply moved spirit that even the very bones quake and are of no force. For which reason, in not a few dying [souls], we observe it to be a habit that they tremble all over in a certain tearful way, and are horribly distended due to narrow straits and agony. For with the vital juice and humors lacking, both the bones and the other parts of the body, destitute of their sustenance as is natural, let slip their vigor; for that reason, they waste away and are dispersed, from which event in fact,</p>

scripturis pro dignioribus animi uirtutibus interdum accipi sciunt studiosi.	quivering and debility usually arise. For the rest, scholars know to accept bones in scripture now and then for the worthier virtues of the soul.
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Follow-up: More about bones in *Psalms*:

pdf 252, p. 118;

pdf 368-9, p. 176-176v;

pdf 432-3, p. 208-208v;

pdf 691, p. 337v.

4. Terminology: In my translation and annotations of the first work published by GB Folengo, *Dialogi, quos Pomiliones uocat*, 1533, I introduced readers to some of the key terms that both Teofilo and Giovanni Battista Folengo employ.

Psalms {pdf 101, p. 42v}

Spes ergo, fides, fiduciaque, quae idem pene sunt, impetrant a Deo: praeterea nihil, quo tandem tuarum actionum supercilium deponere perdiscas.

Therefore hope, faith and trust, which are almost the same/ the same as “pene” are granted by God, nothing else, by which you may at last learn to set aside the haughtiness of your actions.

Further examples of all these terms abound:

Pene is merely an alternate spelling of the adverb *paene* (almost, nearly), but is used (300 times in the *Psalms*) in contexts in which it suggests the Italian word *pene* (penis, phallus).

humanae pene collapsae {pdf 265, p. 124v}

collapsed human pene

pene indomabile {pdf 374, p. 179}

untamable pene

innumerae pene erectae sunt {pdf 407, p. 195v}

innumerable pene are erect/ almost innumerable [places of worship] have been erected

pene incredibilem {pdf 420, p. 202}, {pdf 671, p. 327v}

pene in nobis extinctum reuiuiscere {pdf 259, p. 121v}

to revive the pene extinct in us

immitem immanemque pene {pdf 562, p. 273}

huge and unstoppable pene

Heu remem pene incredibilem {pdf 491, p. 237v}

Ah, an almost incredible thing, pene

praeque gaudio pene insanire uidetur {pdf 673, p. 328v}

prae laetitia pene insaniunt {pdf 686, p. 335}

pene dicere erubesco {pdf 712, p. 348}

I blush to say pene
 pene extinct-
 pene extincta {pdf 295, p. 139v}
 pene extinctam {pdf 791, p. 387v}
 pene extinctum {pdf 906, p. 445}

Spes (hope) is used for what may fill a **pene**, so it is often akin to *sperma* (semen, sperm).

{pdf 325, p. 154v} O spem, quo tuas stylo laudes celebrabo?...

(O hope, with what style/ pen will I celebrate your praises...)

{pdf 241, p. 112v} Quid si porro spe firma erectus (vide quid agat spes)

(Again, what if, having been raised/ erected by firm hope (see what hope can do...))

and see {pdf 246, p. 115}: **spem** firmam... **sperau**i... **spe** certa... **spes** tua firma... **spe**ique oratio... Nam oratio **spei** auxilio denudata, impia est, & quae proculdubio repulsam, e qua confusio, atque animi desperatio emanat, refert. Ita **spem** ignauam... Siquidem **spes** orationis calcar est, oratio uero **spei** stimulus.

A piling up of variations on a term within a paragraph or page is rather frequent. *Animus* and *anima*, which often function as phallus, are involved in a number of these concentrated exhibits:

pdf 184-5, p. 84-84v, which also includes a study of *in vanum*; pdf 175, p. 79v;

pdf 188, p. 86;

pdf 240-1, p. 112-112v.

Another such involves *rect-*, for which there are several passages in *Psalms*, *Rectis formosa est laus*, pdf 258, p. 121, and one that starts off with an upbeat description of the peaceful/ passive man:

pdf 325, p. 154v

Pacificum hic uocat uirum illum, qui neminem contemnens, omnibus benefacit, dat, commodat, dissidia componit, pacemque cum omnibus, ut eum admonet Paulus, seruat.

[The poet, David] calls that man peaceful/ passive, who looks down on no one, provides benefit to all: he gives, accommodates, resolves disagreements, and keeps the peace with all, as Paul admonishes him.

Folengo then adds to his portrait of the *vir pacificus*:

{pdf 359, p. 171v}

Etiam uir pacificus meus, hoc est, amicus meus quo nitebar, edens panem meum, magnificauit contra me insidias.

Even my peaceful/ passive man/hero, my friend on whom I was leaning, eating my bread, was vaunting treacheries against me.

[Cf. *pane caret*, Teofilo Folengo, *Varium poema*, *De Surrento*, 44.9.]

Linguistic playfulness is everywhere in sight: GB Folengo does so much with say, just the root *lab-*, *laps-* (to slip, glide):

1. collabor
2. collapsio,
3. collapsus
4. delabor
5. dilabor
6. delapsus,
7. dilapsus
8. elabor, elapsus
9. illabor, illapsus
10. labasco, labascere
11. labefacto
12. labilis, -is, labile; labilior, -ius; labilissimus
13. labo, labare
14. labor,
15. lapso, lapsare
16. lapsus
17. perlabor,
18. perlapsus
19. praeterlabor,
20. praeterlapsus
21. prolabor,
22. prolapsus
23. relabor
24. relapsus

5. Conclusion and Lack Thereof

I have finally grasped why I am unable to produce an effective display of samples: I am a small-plot gardener dazzled by a treasure trove that extends beyond my line of sight.

Giambattista (Giovanni Battista) Folengo died in 1559, after having published vast works of erotic erudite parody which exploited scripture and biblical commentaries for entertainment and social criticism. Had he been the brother of contemporary writer, François Rabelais, I think there would be many fine publications regarding his extraordinary achievement. But GB Folengo was the brother of Teofilo Folengo, and there continues to be a lack of appreciation for the intellectual and linguistic heights attained by Italian writers, especially in the sixteenth century.

Ann Mullaney, February, 2022

Quam quidem rem considerans Propheta, timensque ne mens in rebus hisce nihili occupata creatoris amorem in creaturas retorqueret, illam pene sopitam dormitabundamque, blandiusculis inuitat uerbis, dicens: Lauda anima mea dominum. Mea animula, inquit, uagula, delicatula, quid in imis uersaris? quo tuum destinasti amorem? infelix. Quid, oro, in terris est, quod admodum laudare debeas, & admirari? quid putas inueniri posse in hoc mundo, quod tuum non quaerat interitum?

Psalms, pdf 897, p. 440v