

Swinging the Top

A Crux in the Old English *Apollonius of Tyre*

Fourth ASSC Graduate Student Conference, Yale University, 16 Feb 2008

Revised 30 May 2008

E-Ching Ng
e-ching.ng@yale.edu

It has never been quite clear what the Old English translator thought the recently shipwrecked Apollonius of Tyre did at the bathhouse that made King Arcestrates feel young again and inspired such friendly feeling that it won an invitation for dinner with the princess. After several feats of speed in a ball game, the Latin says Apollonius skilfully massaged the king with wax ointment:

Apollonius ut audivit se laudari, constanter accessit ad regem et docta manu **ceroma refricuit** cum tanta **subtilitate** ut de sene iuvenem redderet. Deinde in solio gratissime fovit et exeunti manum officiose dedit et *post haec* discessit. (CCCC MS 318)¹

*When Apollonius heard himself praised, he boldly approached the king and with skilled hand **rubbed (him) with wax ointment so expertly** that the old man was rejuvenated. Then he massaged him in the bath most agreeably and helped him out courteously and then went away.*

(My translation)

The Old English differs considerably in saying that Apollonius *swang ðone top mid micelre swiftnysse*, which on the most literal level would mean that he ‘hit the top very swiftly’:

Ða ða Apollonius gehyrde þæt se cyning hyne herede, he arn rædlice and genealæhte to ðam cyngc and mid gelæredre handa he **swang ðone top** mid micelre **swiftnysse** þæt se cyngc wæs geþuht swilce he of ylde to iuguðe gewænd wære, and æfter þam on his cynesetle he him gecwemlice ðenode. (CCCC MS 201)²

*Then when Apollonius heard that the king praised him, he quickly ran and approached the king and with skilled hand **whipped the top** with such great **rapidity** that it seemed to the king as if he were changed from old age to youth; and after that he ministered to him agreeably on his throne. And then when he went out of the bath, he led him by the hand, and afterwards returned the way he had previously come.* (Swanton 1975:165)

So singular is this passage that it represents Bosworth-Toller's sole non-gloss citation for *top* in the sense of "a *top* to play with (?)" (Bosworth & Toller 1898:1002), and also the only one under *swingan* in sense III that isn't taken from a recipe: "without the idea of hurting, *to whip* a top, cream, etc. *beat up*" (Bosworth & Toller 1898:958).³ Toller's question mark echoes that in the minds of many other readers, such as Benjamin Thorpe, whose edition left *swang þone top* untranslated with the guarded footnote: "I have here retained the Saxon word, being in doubt as to its signification" (Thorpe 1834:41). Doubt indeed: what place could a children's toy have in the translator's mental image of a Roman gymnasium? How could its manipulation be so athletic that it would make an old man feel young again? And how could one beat up a top in the same sense as beating up *sealt and þreora ægra geolcan*? If that isn't the sense in which *swang* is used, then how are we to reconcile such a civilized moment with the violent flogging or striking motion usually associated with *swingan*? In short, do we even know what the Old English translation means, let alone what considerations motivated the translator?

Other readings

Not massage

Quite rightly, no reader or editor has suggested that the translator is simply using an unusual idiom for massage. Certainly one could assume that *swang* here is used in the sense "II. *to give a blow with the hand*" (Bosworth & Toller 1898:958) but without the intention to hurt, if only a complementary reading for the word *top* were available from the three senses given in Bosworth-Toller: "I. *a top, summit*. II. *a lock of hair* ... III. *a top to play with*" (Bosworth & Toller 1898:1002). Similarly, in Old Norse *toppr* means only "(1) Top, highest point or end ... (2) Hair lock, hair" (Fritzner 1886-1896). The only body part available is the king's scalp, and one surely wouldn't massage that with the kind of striking motion associated with *swingan*. Middle English does add another sense to the word *top*, "(7b) in comb.: ~ **side**, ?the dorsal side of an animal; ?error for **tother side** [cp. **tother** adj.]" (MED 2001), which sounds promising, except that this was a relatively rare or erroneous usage and requires the collocation *top side*, which is certainly not present in the phrase *swang þone top*. It seems safe to conclude that whatever the Old English translator is doing, he isn't finding a creative way to say that Apollonius is massaging King Arcestrates.

Probably not masturbation

Though the verb *fricare* was often an euphemism for, ahem, intimate massage (Adams 1982:184), no one has yet suggested that this was what the Anglo-Saxon translator meant, though David Townsend (2004) has ably considered the possibility that this what he was thinking. The whip-play suggested by *swang þone top* strikes non-initiates like myself as rather violent language,

but wiser heads have awakened me to the existence of the idiom *flogging the bishop* and the band *Meat Beat Manifesto*. Is there, then, any evidence suggesting a parallel idiom in Old English?

Considering verbs first, the confessionals tend to use expressions such as ‘if someone *besmīte* himself (with his hands) (on purpose), let him fast for forty nights’ (*Confessional* VI.7c, VII.8h; *Handbook* 256–8; *Penitential* IV.11).⁴ *Besmītan* means ‘to defile, pollute’ and appears in descriptions of all kinds of illicit sexual activity, from nocturnal emissions to bestiality (*DOE* 2003; *Confessional* VII.8b, VIII.9f). Another fairly common condition requiring penitence is ‘if someone *brīne* himself with his hands,’ where *brīnan* usually means ‘to touch’ (Bosworth-Toller 1898). So far, however, I have not encountered any verbs quite as vigorous as *swingan*.⁵

There appears to be more variety in attested vocabulary for the relevant noun. The penitentials refer to a (*mannes*) *ende*, *pintel*, *eowend*, *getawa*, *teors*, *þeōb-geweald*, *sceap*, *sceamu*, *gesceamigenlic*, *sceamlim*, *wāpen*, *gecynd*, *gecynd-lim*, *cennendlic*, and *cennendan leomu* (Bosworth-Toller 1898; Roberts 2000:60; *OEC* 2004). Of these, *getawa* is the only one which a scribe could confuse with *top*. However, the phrase which actually glosses *instrumenta genitalia* in *Bald’s Leechbook* is *mannes getawa*. Without *mannes*, *getawa* seems to occur only in the sense of ‘instruments,’ for instance in the phrase *Dis syndon ða getawa* (Bosworth-Toller 1989; Cockayne 1864–6). As such the more fleshly interpretation would not appear to be available to Apollonius.

Of course, in the absence of an actual speaker of Old English, preferably someone who knew the translator very well indeed, we will never be able to rule out the possibility that the king was test-driving Apollonius for his daughter. Occam’s razor and our wanderings through Old English penitentials and medical texts do not, however, give us any special reason to assume that our translator was unusually broad-minded in his depiction of male bonding.

A ball?

The most pressing question any editor of this passage must answer is why *ceroma* was translated as *top*. Given the context of the recently completed ball game, it would have been eminently reasonable for the Old English translator to assume that the object Apollonius was handling so skilfully was a ball (though it is still a bit odd that one would *fricare* or *refricare*⁶ a ball). This was the interpretation of one early editor, A. S. Cook, who suggested that “*top* would seem to signify the same as *ðoðor*” (Cook 1921:169). Unfortunately, *top* never seems to have been used in the sense of ‘a ball’ in Old English, Middle English or Old Norse. The furthest afield one can get within the general sense of sporting equipment or plaything is the use of *top* to gloss *trochus*, in cases where it is unclear whether the glossator took *trochus* in its classical sense of ‘hoop’ or its later sense of ‘spinning top’ (Bosworth & Toller 1898:1002). As such, I would agree with Peter Goolden, who rejected Cook’s reading.

Goolden's own interpretation is a little more plausible and certainly more creative; he suggests that "The translator originally rendered *ceroma* as 'ball', *þōþer*, and the *top* of our text is a later scribe's misreading and miscorrection of *þōþer* without due regard for its propriety in the context" (Goolden 1958:52). If so, I think we may still reasonably question why the scribe would have thought *top* was an appropriate replacement for *þōþor*. But the weakest link here seems to me the putative miscopying of *þōþer* as *top* at some stage. It is possible that *oþ* might be mistaken for *op* (though there is a distinction even in low-grade cursive hands), and if *er* was abbreviated to a flourish it might be overlooked.⁷ But it's hard to see an initial *þ* or *ð* being miscopied as *t*, when the word *þōþor* would have been the natural one to supply in a lacuna anyway. As such Goolden's suggestion seems to me not impossible, but implausible.

A top

In general, modern readers see the word *top* as representing a spinning top. Elizabeth Archibald departs slightly from most in asserting that the word *ceroma* was construed not as a top but as a game: "*Ceroma*, the waxy ointment used for massage, also caused problems: the Old English translator, entering into the spirit of the gymnasium but guessing wildly, took it to be some sort of game played with a spinning top." (Archibald 1991:72-3) I must regretfully join the majority in rejecting her reading, though, because unless the translator had a highly corrupt Latin translation before him, I don't see how he could have thought the verb (*refricuit* or *fricavit*) was taking a game in the abstract as an object.

For those who read *top* straightforwardly in its modern sense of the children's toy, the greater difficulty is what to do with the verb *swingan*. As David Townsend notes, *swingan* is consistently associated with the motion of flogging or striking, not with spinning. Bosworth-Toller does list two senses not associated with violence: "V. *to beat* the wings (?)" and, as aforementioned, "III. without the idea of hurting, *to whip* a top, cream, etc. *beat up*" (Bosworth & Toller 1898:958). Sense V can be ruled out in the absence of wings. The application of sense III is troubling in that Bosworth-Toller seems to be conflating two quite different motions here, that of mixing up a cake and of spinning a top. Certainly it is possible that *swingan* simply represents motion with some form of centrifugal momentum, and that there is nothing incompatible in all these senses, but if there is a more obvious reading it seems plain that it is to be preferred.

My reading

I would suggest that by *swang þone top*, the Old English translator really did mean that Apollonius was using a whip to keep a top in motion. Admittedly it's not completely clear why he lighted on this particular game, but I would argue that it was by no means an arbitrary choice.

Whipping tops and the times

Whipping-tops were known in classical and medieval times. The Greeks had them (Hector reels like one in *Iliad* 14, and Pisthetaerus whips the informer like a top in Aristophanes' *Birds*). So did the Romans:

namque agor ut per plana citus sola **verbere turben**
quem celer adueta versat ab arte puer

*for I am driven like a swift **top** on the flat ground **by a whip**
which an agile boy spins with accustomed skill.*

(Tibullus 1.5)

Ceu quondam torto volitans **sub verbere turbo**,
quem pueri magno in gyro vacua atria circum
intenti ludo exercent; ille actus habena
curvatis fertur spatiis; stupet inscia supra
inpubesque manus, mirata volubile buxum;
dant animos plagae: non cursu segnior illo
per medias urbes agitur populosque feroces.

*And, as young striplings **whip the top** for sport,
On the smooth pavement of an empty court;
The wooden engine flies and whirls about,
Admir'd, with clamors, of the beardless rout;
They lash aloud; each other they provoke,
And lend their little souls at ev'ry stroke:
Thus fares the queen; and thus her fury blows
Amidst the crowd, and kindles as she goes.*

(Aeneid 7.378ff)

At least some Old English readers and writers had access to the *Aeneid* (Lapidge 1994). We cannot know for sure whether our Old English translator was one of those who knew that whipping-tops existed in Apollonius' world, but they were apparently known to his readers from personal experience. The writer of *Njal's Saga* evidently expected the following simile to conjure a vivid mental picture:

Eftir það snerist hann á hæli svo sem **skaptkringla** ...
*After that he turned sharp round on his heel like a **whipping-top** ...*

(*Njal's Saga*, §145: *Of Kari and Thorgeir*.)

Also, a whipping top was found at the Winchester excavations (Keene 1990). Note that its distinct spindle shape lends no support to an interpretation of *swang þone top* as a graphic euphemism along the lines of *flog the bishop*.

Played in groups?

It is still hard for the modern mind to picture Apollonius and the king bonding over mutual wonder that a spinning top doesn't fall down, but it seems that that kind of chiefly solitary play was not the norm in medieval and classical times. Added to the competitive clamor of the lads in the *Aeneid* passage above, there is the evidence of a Greek manuscript dating to c.500 BCE which states:

A stranger of Atarne consulted Pittacus of Mitylene, one of the Seven Sages of Greece (651-569 B.C.), concerning a wife. The question was whether he should take a certain girl in his own rank of life, who had a fortune equal to his own, or a damsel of higher status and with more money. The sage told him to go to a group of boys who were playing at whipping-tops in the midst of a wide cross-road. As he approached them he heard one of the boys say to his fellow, "Whip the nearest one," and he accepted this as an oracle. (Haddon 1898:204)⁸

At the very least, then, top-whipping could be a group activity, and therefore was very probably some kind of competition between individuals or teams, as is also suggested by the boy's injunction—perhaps eager, perhaps indignant—that his playmate should "whip the nearest one" (Livrea 1995:4).

Admittedly, we cannot say for sure that the Old English played with tops in the same fashion as the Greeks and Romans: the best evidence I have seen is late and far away, a statement that in 1875 Scotland "a number of group games were played with tops, but racing was the only one played with the whip-top" (Brown 1945:369). But I think it makes sense to accept tentatively, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the translator shared this rather more stimulating view of top-whipping. It explains his segue from ball-hitting, so bizarrely abrupt if spinning tops is a moment of giggling childishness, but so natural if Apollonius is simply transitioning from one flashy athletic demonstration of speed to another.

Childish or manly?

Though again, we can say nothing for certain about Old English attitudes, the customs of their descendants nonetheless suggest that we need not posit a chubby-faced prepubescent Apollonius in order to see him plausibly whipping a top. The prescribed play activities of sixteenth-century Harrow students comprised "driving a top, tossing a hand-ball, running and shooting and none other" (Druett 1935:123),⁹ a combination that seems to have been intended to encourage vigorous exercise by youths, not pure recreation for very young children.¹⁰ Similarly, when Shakespeare has Sir Toby Belch say "He's a coward and a coystrill that will not drink to my niece

till his brains turn o' th' toe like a parish-top" (*Twelfth Night* 1.3), he is making reference to a tradition of top-whipping for adults:

... this is a large top kept in a parish for public exercise. Elsewhere it is spoken of as a means of keeping idle hands out of trouble, and of stirring the blood on cold nights. No authentic parish top seems to have survived, but sketches purporting to portray the object suggest that it was large (perhaps eight inches tall) and weighed two pounds of more [figure omitted here]. To keep this top in motion over the uneven surface of a courtyard would indeed stir the blood. Some scholars have discounted the allusion to the parish top as a jest. However, it has been suggested that rivalries between towns or parishes in the form of athletics or sports could include contests with whipped tops (resembling hockey or lacrosse in causing the object to encroach on opponents' parts of the field). The town or parish top would be a valued community possession both for practice and in actual competition. (Gould 1973:131)¹¹

Intriguingly, England appears to be the only European country in which adults played with whip-tops, according to the histories of toys I have seen (Gould 1973; Daiken 1963). It is possible that this perception of tops as a manly entertainment goes back to the Anglo-Saxon period, explaining why the Old English translator might have seen top-whipping as a suitable replacement for the ballgame of the original Latin.

Why did he do it?

It seems quite clear, then, that the Old English translator could well have meant exactly what he said on the page, that Apollonius was whipping a top. It is harder, however, to answer the question of whether he mistranslated *ceroma refricuit/fricavit* on purpose—and if so, why?

A cover-up?

As David Townsend has argued, there is certainly a possibility that the translator understood this passage and the Greek bathhouse well enough to perceive its potential homoeroticism, though that still begs the question of why top-whipping occurred to him as a good clean distractor from homoerotic unspeakables. Allen Frantzen and R. D. Fulk have noted that the Old English not only considered gay male sexual activity a distinctly greater sin than heterosexual fornication, but that the younger partner was considered to have transgressed to an equal or even greater extent than the older one (Frantzen 1996:275; Fulk 2004:9).¹² That attitude would certainly make our translator jumpy about putting his handsome hero's hands all over a king old enough to have a marriageable daughter, especially when *fricare* was frequently used as a verb for masturbation (Townsend 2004; Adams 1982:180-181). Nor is this crux an isolated departure from the Latin. At least twice the translator makes an effort to present Apollonius as a more Germanically masculine hero, notably when the Old English Apollonius merely looks sorrowful on the seashore and at the banquet,

whereas the Latin has him weeping copiously in both episodes (Riedinger 1990). Ours is a translator who could, I think, have been ready to sanitize this touchy scene.

One wonders whether there were still more reasons to protect our hero from readers' censure. As Townsend notes, one unusual element of the Latin narrative is Apollonius' acting as a bath attendant (Townsend 2004:182), a function that seems normally to have been carried out by bathhouse employees, one's own slaves or, at a pinch, oneself.¹³ This probably wasn't sufficient motivation for changing the text, though; if the translator had not wanted Apollonius in such a servile position, he could simply have omitted the next line: *and after þam on his cynesetle he him gecwemlice ðenode* [and after that he ministered to him agreeably on his throne] (Swanton 1975:165). Another interesting issue in this passage is that even the Romans might have looked askance at Apollonius bathing with his future father-in-law,¹⁴ although our translator almost certainly couldn't have realized that. He might well have known, however, that the early church fathers were uneasy about bathhouses, especially their association with sinfully hedonistic activities like athletics and particularly massage. In Clement of Alexandria's words, "Bathing for pleasure is to be omitted. For unblushing pleasure must be cut out by the roots; and the bath is to be taken by women for cleanliness and health, by men for health alone" (*Paedagogus* 3.9). Of course, we cannot be sure that the Old English translator had read Clement of Alexandria firsthand, though he is quoted and translated by Anglo-Saxon writers (Lapidge 1994; Lapidge 2006:177), so it's entirely possible that the only homophobic concerns at work here were non-ecclesiastically inspired.

An honest guess?

I am not sure, however, that our translator really is trying hard to cover anything up. If so, why does he bother, just after our crux, to translate *deinde in solio gratissime fovit* [then he massaged him in the bathtub most agreeably],¹⁵ as *and after þam on his cynesetle he him gecwemlice ðenode* [and after that he ministered to him agreeably on his throne]? It's true that the translator has evidently preferred the more abstract *ðenode* to the explicit physicality of *fovit*. But at the same time, if he really didn't want us to imagine anything suspect, it would have been far more effective to omit this line. And then there is the other mistranslation in this line, the nonsensical rendering of *solium* as some kind of portable "throne," especially jarring when Apollonius helps the king out of the bath in the next line. Both "bathtub" and "throne" would be correct translations of *solium* in isolation (Lewis & Short 1969), but Kortekaas states that the "bathtub" sense was very common (Kortekaas 2007:187). If our translator does not know it or guess it, he is hardly an expert on bathhouses.

I agree with David Townsend that the Old English had access to texts which would have told them that massage with ointment took place in bathhouses (Townsend 2004:186),¹⁶ but the fact is that our translator doesn't seem to have applied such knowledge to this passage. His difficulty, I think, arose from the word *ceroma*. It's not a common word, and it's not obvious from *docta manu*

ceroma refricuit cum tanta subtilitate that *ceroma* means “an ointment for wrestlers, much used in the time of the emperors” (Lewis & Short 1969). In the entirely possible event that the translator lacked access to authors who used this word (chiefly Pliny and Martial),¹⁷ and was not imaginative or quick-witted enough to realize that some kind of ointment would logically accompany the verb *refricuit/fricavit*, this passage could well have puzzled him.

The fact that the lines are rendered so faithfully with respect to length and sentence structure persuades me that our translator was making an earnest effort to translate these lines with some degree of accuracy. And from his point of view, is it really such a long shot? The verb *refricuit/fricavit* could arguably have militated against such an interpretation—most games are not played by rubbing the equipment—but evidently our translator perceived this problem and chose to ignore it, since he does after all pair *top* with the more appropriate *swang*, despite its conceptual distance from *refricuit/fricavit*. No such leap would have been necessary for emending *cum tanta subtilitate*¹⁸ to *swiftnyse*: Tibullus, among others, makes reference to the skill required to whip a top, and we have seen that whip-tops lent themselves to racing games (Tibullus 1.5; Brown 1945:369). Given the fairly logical assumption that Apollonius is following up one feat of athletic derring-do with another, the Old English translator is being quite sensible to assume that the Latin text would have used *pilum* again if a ball had been meant, so *ceroma* must be some other piece of athletic equipment. And after ballgames, it is hard to think of another equipment-based sport besides top-whipping that could easily be played indoors. I don’t think one can confidently argue that the word *ceroma* reminded the translator of some other word that meant ‘top,’ though there are a couple of far-flung candidates from Old Norse and Greek (*skaptkringla* and *kōros*),¹⁹ but I do think that context alone might well have led him to this blind guess.

Conclusion

Given what we know about the way tops were played with, and the internal evidence of the Old English text, it seems to me that the most plausible reading of *swang þone top* is that Apollonius has switched sports and is now quite literally using a whip to drive a top in the context of some kind of race, which happens to carry him closer to the king. It is more difficult to say whether the Old English translation of *ceroma refricuit/fricavit* as *swang þone top* is the result of a wild guess or full queasy comprehension of our hero’s sexually fraught position. The sensible working hypothesis, I think, is that the translator couldn’t quite work out what was going on, but certainly wouldn’t want to assume the worst. We might do worse than to follow his example, in which case we need not assume that he deliberately falsified his text. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to Roberta Frank and Fred Robinson for their lightning-swift and perspicacious comments, and to the participants of the ASSC graduate conference, Pleasure in Anglo-Saxon England (16 February 2008, Yale). I

have not managed to incorporate all their comments yet, and for this I apologize deeply. I am also most grateful to Haukur Þorgeirsson and Raquel Steres for their timely assistance with Old Norse and Greek translations respectively.

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¹ Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 318, §13, as reproduced by Goolden's edition (Goolden 1958:21). Goolden believes that the Old English translator had a Latin original which was similar to CCCC MS 318 but not identical; he has used italics to indicate emendations which bring CCCC MS 318 closer to the presumed Latin original for our Old English version. His work has been criticized by Joseph McGowan (McGowan 1987-88); for our purposes, the whole range of frequent readings from the Latin manuscripts should be taken into account and have been indicated where relevant, but fortunately there is very little meaningful variation in this passage (Kortekaas 2004).

² Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 201, §13 (Goolden 1958:20).

³ I presume the Apollonius citations were introduced by Toller, since they do not appear in Bosworth's original definitions for *top* and *swingan* (Bosworth 1838: 77o, 72x).

⁴ Anthony Davies led me to these references to masturbation (Davies 1991:104, n.93-94). I refer to the texts using his nomenclature: the *Old English Confessional* or *Pseudo-Egbert Penitential* (Spindler 1934), the *Old English Handbook* (Fowler 1965), and the *Old English Penitential* (Raith 1933).

⁵ Etymologically *brīnan* is connected to Old Norse *brīna* 'to cleave, hurt,' and Bosworth-Toller defines it as 'to touch, reach, strike' but from the evidence of citations, it does not seem to be intrinsically violent in Old English. As such, *brīnan*'s use in describing masturbation does not support a similar usage for the normally violent *swingan*.

⁶ The two verbs appear in different *Apollonius* manuscripts. Since we do not have a perfectly matching Latin original for our Old English *Apollonius* (see note 1 above), I will consider both in my discussion. The verbs would have a similar sense in this context: *fricare* is "to rub, rub down" and *refricare* is "to rub again, scratch open, gall, fret" (Lewis & Short 1969).

⁷ Until I can confirm that this was common Anglo-Saxon practice, I am basing these judgments on the plate of British Library Additional Charter 19791 as reproduced in Roberts 2005:47, which shows low-grade insular cursive p and þ, and also the plate of CCCC MS 173, which contains the abbreviated-r flourish. Neither of them are connected to CCCC MS 201 to my knowledge.

⁸ The actual manuscript does not appear to be cited. I am not sure how to track this down.

⁹ Every source I have consulted agrees that this statement is found in the "Orders, States and Rules" laid down by John Lyon in 1591, but I cannot find it in the 1801 reprint of that document (Lyon 1591). I find it slightly easier to believe that it was omitted in the reprint than that three separate histories of the Harrow School fabricated it.

¹⁰ Harrow students today are usually 13-18 years old. In the sixteenth century some were as young as eight, but the younger students seem to have been farmed out to "dames' houses" in nearby hamlets, and there seems no reason to believe that top-whipping was permitted specifically to cater to their needs. Indeed, if my sources are correct in surmising that "shooting" refers to archery, the permitted play activities taken as a whole would seem inappropriate for the very young (Chaplin 1948:28).

¹¹ Other sources corroborating this description of the parish-top include an early Shakespearean scholar, George Stevens, who wrote on *Twelfth Night*: “This is one of the customs now laid aside. A large top was formerly kept in every village, to be whipped in frosty weather, that the peasants might be kept warm by exercise, and out of mischief while they could not work.” (Stevens 1787:9-10) Another history of toys states: “By the middle of the sixteenth century the whip-top had become an adult toy in England. Old engravings [*Douce Folios*, Bodleian Library, Oxford] depict large models which were put at the disposal of peasants for their diversion by a local patron or by order of the ruling sovereign” (Daiken 1963:37). This source assumes the top was introduced to Europe by Dutch seamen who had seen them in the East, which is why it gives this late date for this development of the whip-top.

¹² Allen Frantzen writes, intriguingly: “The young boy received the same penance for interfemoral intercourse as an adult. More remarkably, the younger boy forced into intercourse, or abused, is the one who had to do penance, not the older boy or man who abused him. It would seem logical that these provisions sought to protect boys from the sexual advances of older men, but it is plain that the canons seek to protect older boys and men from the young ones. In part such a penance must have been intended to purify the boy and remove the pollution of sexual intercourse from him. The demand that the boy do penance for an act he did not initiate, or even participate in willingly, also suggests that he is seen as a temptation to older men, and that even though he is young, he must be held accountable for his effects on them. [I have omitted a footnote here.] I have searched in vain for penances for older men and boys who forced younger boys into sexual relations; penalties for heterosexual sins involving even bishops and monks are plentiful, but not for homosexual acts.” (Frantzen 1996:275)

¹³ Kortekaas comments: “[Bath attendants] could be very meddlesome and remiss in their duties; hence the expression *ἐμαντῶ βαλανέσω* ‘I will act as my own servant.’ (Kortekaas 2007:188). Garrett G. Fagan’s *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* cites quite an extensive range of bathhouse scenarios, but no friends attending on each other, or even on their patrons. There are even cases of slaves attending the baths as paying customers themselves, so acting as a bath attendant does seem out of character for Apollonius. (Fagan 1999).

¹⁴ Apparently a Roman father was not supposed to bathe with a son beyond the age of puberty, and the same applied to in-laws (Cicero’s *De Officiis* 1.129, *De Oratore* 2.55; Plutarch’s *Cato Major* 20.7-8; *Historia Augusta: Gordiani Tres* 6.4). David Townsend notes that Augustine seems influenced by this attitude when he describes his adolescent shame at being seen with an erection in the baths by his father, and then having the episode reported to his mother: *Quin immo ubi me ille pater in balneis uidit pubescentem et inquieta indutum adulescentia, quasi iam ex hoc in nepotes gestiret, gaudens matri indicauit*, or “But rather, when at the baths my father saw me pubescent and clothed in a restless adolescence, he announced it joyously to my mother as though in this very fact he would engender grandchildren.” (*Confessions*, Book 2; Townsend 2004:184). I doubt one could infer this Roman attitude from simply reading the *Confessions*, though.

¹⁵ On the verb *fovit*, G. A. A. Kortekaas comments that although “massaged” was the literal sense, “[i]n practice this meant that the *παραχύτης* ‘bath attendant’ or the *βαλανεύς* poured hot water over the bathers” (Kortekaas 2007:1888).

¹⁶ Townsend cites Isidore’s *Etymologiae* as stating that “the athletes performed *uncto corpore et perfricato manibus* [with the body anointed and rubbed down by hands],” and Aldhelm’s prose *De Virginitate* as referring to “gymnasts’ use of unguents” (Townsend 2004:186)

¹⁷ The Lewis & Short citations are: “*abl. plur. ceromatis*, Plin. 35, 13, 47, § 168; *acc. plur. ceromas*, Arn. 3, 114), = *kêrôma*, an ointment for wrestlers, much used in the time of the emperors, Plin. 1. 1.; 28, 4, 13, § 51; Mart. 4, 19; 7, 32; 14, 50” (Lewis & Short 1969).

¹⁸ In place of *subtilitate*, a number of other Latin manuscripts have *levitate* [with lightness or smoothness] and *lenitate* [with softness, smoothness, gentleness, mildness] (Lewis & Short 1969). Either could have appeared in the Old English translator’s Latin source, and both could have been perceived as *levitate*, implying a light and skilful touch with

the whip. As such, the mental process which would lead to the mistranslation *mid swiftnysse* is no more obscure here than if *subtilitate* did appear in his source.

¹⁹ As aforementioned, *Njal's Saga* refers to a whipping-top as a *skaptkringla*. The resemblance between *ceroma* and *kring* is certainly an interesting coincidence, but since the Old English cognate for *kring* would have been the *bring* word-family, it may be overly hasty to assume that Old Norse was the inspiration for this mistranslation. Another possible “false friend” of the translator might have been the Greek word *kōros*, which is used once by Clement of Alexandria to describe “a piece of wood attached to a cord, and swung around to as to cause a whistling noise” used in the worship of Dionysius (*Protrepticus* 2.17; Schaff 2001). This, along with other symbolic objects, represented the toys Dionysius played with as a child. However, the word seems to be obscure, even from context.