



CLASSICAL TURNS

mail@classicalturns.com : www.classicalturns.com

Job Ref.: MAY1025

Client Name: XXXXXXXXXX

Latin translation for tattoo

The translation of ‘let it all hang out’ into Latin is not particularly easy, since it is a phrase sprung from 20th-century English slang, but it can nevertheless be done. We may begin with the motto that you suggest, that of The Evergreen State College, namely *omnia extares*. The motto for the College (founded 1967) was first hit upon in English, the appropriately liberal “Let it all hang out” being suggested at a meeting of senior figures of the College in 1971 by a certain Beryl Crowe. Wanting to set this motto in Latin, the group contacted the College Librarian, Monica Caulfield, who is reputed to have written after thirty seconds’ thought ‘*OMNIA EXTARES*’ on a chalkboard, and to have stated that the phrase needs to have an exclamation mark in order to be correct (see T. Rosenhow’s 2009 social history of the college). From some rummaging around on the Internet, it still seems to be the case that people think the exclamation mark important, and I have not found anyone to have recorded their qualms about the translation. So why then do I?

To put it simply, the phrase means not “let it all hang out” but rather “you should be sticking out with regard to everything (but are not)”: the verb *exto* (sometimes written *exsto*, which is less correct) means ‘to protrude’, ‘stick out’ (not ‘hang out’ or ‘hang down’, like hair or other pendulous objects), and it does not mean ‘to make *something* stick out’; furthermore, the fact that the particular form *extares* is used means that, at the time one says the phrase, it is *now* not the case that the hypothetical

‘you’ is letting himself stick out. Why it means this specifically in Latin is not easy to explain without getting technical (it is owing to the fact that *extares* is an ‘imperfect subjunctive’). Suffice it to say that a more long-winded translation of the ‘official’ motto *omnia extares* would be ‘you should be / should have been sticking out with regard to all things but you aren’t / weren’t’. Latin had no exclamation marks, and they are not typically required; you certainly would not want to have one in this instance. It is odd that no one has pointed out why the motto does not make good sense before; perhaps they have and I have not seen it. Of course if you do not mind about the Latin being ungrammatical, and College patriotism is paramount, you can keep the official motto for your tattoo, although you should be aware that it is bad Latin.

A better translation for ‘let all things hang out’, if you mean this to be an order to someone (a hypothetical ‘you’) for the present and the future (as is natural), would be *omnia demittas* or *omnia demitte* (if the verb *exto* is wanted, the form should be *exta* or *extes*, but *omnia* remains a rather forced usage, an ‘adverbial accusative’, alongside this verb.) If, however, you are tattooing your own body, you need to think whether you want ‘let it all hang out’ to be an order to someone else (a hypothetical ‘you’) or to you yourself who are doing the hanging: if the latter, then you would most naturally say “I let all things hang out” or “I will let all things out”: these two forms are respectively *omnia demitto* and *omnia demittam*. If you want the order to be to someone else (perhaps addressing yourself as ‘you’, which is not particularly common in Latin but can be done), use either *omnia demittas* or (more directly) *omnia demitte*, as given at the start of this paragraph. If you do not want the sense of ‘let hang down’ but would prefer ‘stick out’, you should go for *omnia exsere* or *omnia exseras* (both ‘stick everything out’) or *omnia exsero* or *omnia exseram* (‘I stick everything out’ and ‘I will stick everything out’ respectively). If there is a reference to the geoduck, that noble mascot of the college, it is important to work out exactly what is going on with that creature; any verb to do with ‘make erect’ is different from what is given here. There is no obvious way of obtaining an exact equivalence of letters in either half, unfortunately, as you would like, unless you are prepared to change the meaning further (e.g. *omnia passa* or *omnia fluxa*, which mean ‘everything (is) free/loose’).

Should you wish to print the translation as a tattoo, as you have indicated, the following suggestions can be given about the script. Any italic font, particularly one that is slightly

joined together but well spaced, would be attractive (e.g. *Cardo*, *Papyrus* and *Perpetua*); please note, however, that there is no need to capitalise Latin, not even the first letter of the first word. If, by contrast, you wish to have the whole phrase in capitals – which is how Latin was actually written in antiquity - good fonts include CASTELLAR, ENGRAVERS MT or PERPETUA TITLING MT, but any neat capital lettering would work fine. Please note that in Latin capitals instances of the letter ‘u’, as well as ‘v’, should appear as ‘V’ (e.g. FLVXA not FLUXA). To write the first phrase I suggest in Engravers MT would be as follows:

OMNIA DEMITTAS

Please feel to email me if you have any further questions about these translations or their script.