

Edited by ALEXANDRA LIANERI
AND VANDA ZAJKO

TRANSLATION & THE CLASSIC

Identity as Change in the History of Culture



CLASSICAL PRESENCES

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CLASSICAL PRESENCES

The texts, ideas, images, and material culture of ancient Greece and Rome have always been crucial to attempts to appropriate the past in order to authenticate the present. They underlie the mapping of change and the assertion and challenging of values and identities, old and new. *Classical Presences* brings the latest scholarship to bear on the contexts, theory, and practice of such use, and abuse, of the classical past.

Translation and the Classic

Identity as Change in the History of Culture

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ALEXANDRA LIANERI and VANDA ZAJKO

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List of Contributors

Richard H. Armstrong is Associate Professor of Classical Studies and Fellow in the Honors College, University of Houston. He is author of *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World* (Cornell University Press, 2005) and numerous articles on cultural reception and translation studies.

Andrew Benjamin is Professor of Critical Theory and Philosophical Aesthetics at Monash University. His books include *Philosophy's Literature* (Clinamen Press, 2001) and *Style and Time. Essays on the Politics of Appearance* (Northwestern University Press, 2006).

J. M. Coetzee is currently Visiting Professor of Humanities at the University of Adelaide. He is the author of eleven novels, as well as of essays, memoirs, and translations. In 2003 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Johan Geertsema is an assistant professor in the University Scholars Programme, National University of Singapore. Among his research interests are the work of J. M. Coetzee; Romanticism, particularly theories of irony and of the sublime as these intersect with colonialism; and the theory and practice of translation.

Azzedine Haddour is Senior Lecturer in French at University College London. He is author of *Colonial Myths, History and Narrative* (Manchester University Press, 2000), co-editor of *City Visions* (Longman, 2000), co-translator of Sartre's *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (Routledge, 2001), and editor of *The Fanon Reader* (Pluto, 2006).

Edith Hall is Professor of Classical Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she is Director of the Centre for the Reception of Greece and Rome. She is also Co-founder and Co-director of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama at Oxford. Her latest publications include *The Theatrical Cast of Athens: Interactions between Ancient Greek Drama & Society* (Oxford University Press, 2006), *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars: Antiquity to the Third Millennium* (Oxford University Press, 2007) co-edited with E. Bridges and P. J. Rhodes, and *Aristophanes in Performance* (Legenda, 2007), co-edited with Amanda Wrigley.

Lorna Hardwick teaches at the Open University where she is Professor of Classical Studies and Director of the Reception of Classical Texts Research

Project. She is especially interested in the role of Greek and Roman material in modern literature and theatre and in cultural politics.

Dan Hooley is Professor of Classics at the University of Missouri. He has written three books: *Roman Satire* (Blackwell, 2007), *The Knotted Thong: Structures of Mimesis in Persius* (Susquehanna University Press, 1997), and *The Classics in Paraphrase: Ezra Pound and Modern Translators of Latin Poetry* (University of Michigan Press, 1988), and a number of articles and book chapters on Roman poetry, post-classical reception, and translation studies. A book on the reception of satire is in preparation. From 1999 to 2006 he was the editor of *Classical and Modern Literature*.

Alexandra Lianeri has been the Moses and Mary Finley Fellow at Darwin College, Cambridge, and is currently visiting lecturer at the universities of Athens and Thessaloniki. She has published in the fields of translation theory, classical reception studies, critical theory, and the theory and history of historiography. She is completing a book entitled *Towards a New Athens: Translating Dēmokratia in Nineteenth-Century English Thought* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming) and editing a volume on *Ancient History and Western Historical Thought: Theorising Time* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

Dimitris Maronitis is emeritus professor of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki. He has written books, monographs, and numerous articles on Herodotus, Homer, Hesiod, and the ancient lyric poets, as well as on modern Greek poetry and prose. He has translated Herodotus, Sophocles, Hesiod, and Homer's *Odyssey*. A collection of his essays has been translated into English with the title *Homeric Megathemes* (Lexington Books, 2004). His interests include the linguistic behaviour of young people, the language of modern journalism and politics, educational issues, theory and practice of literature and theatre.

Charles Martindale is Professor of Latin and Head of the School of Humanities at the University of Bristol and Director of the Bristol Institute of Greece, Rome, and the Classical Tradition. He has published widely in the field of reception (including translation). Recent publications include *Latin Poetry and the Judgement of Taste: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2005) and two collections, *Shakespeare and the Classics*, co-edited with A. B. Taylor (Cambridge University Press, 2004), and *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, co-edited with Richard F. Thomas (Blackwell, 2006).

Neville Morley is Reader in Ancient Economic History & Historical Theory at the University of Bristol. He works on ancient economic and social history

(‘Trade in Classical Antiquity’, Cambridge University Press, 2007), on the theory and practice of ancient historiography (‘Theories, Models and Concepts in Ancient History’, Routledge, 2004), and on the place of antiquity in nineteenth-century debates on the nature of modernity (‘Antiquity and Modernity’, Blackwell, forthcoming 2008).

Fred Parker is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Cambridge. His last book was *Scepticism and Literature: An Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson* (Oxford University Press, 2003). His current projects include a study of mock-heroic for the *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* and a book on the Devil as Muse in literature from Milton to Thomas Mann.

Jo Paul is a lecturer in Classical Studies at the University of Liverpool. Her doctoral research, ‘Film and the Classical Epic Tradition’, completed at Bristol, is to be published by Oxford University Press, and she is also working on a project on receptions of Pompeii.

Deborah H. Roberts is Professor of Classic and Comparative Literature at Haverford College. She has written on Greek tragedy, Aristotle’s Poetics, and the reception and translation of ancient literature. She co-edited, with Francis M. Dunn and Don Fowler, *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature* (Princeton, 1997); her translation of Euripides’ *Ion* appeared in the Penn Greek Drama Series (Philadelphia, 1999).

John Sallis is Frederick J. Adelman Professor of Philosophy at Boston College and a regular Visiting Professor at the Universität Freiburg. He is the author of many books, including *On Translation* (Indiana University Press, 2002), *Force of Imagination* (Indiana University Press, 2000), *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s ‘Timaeus’* (Indiana University Press, 1999), *Topographies* (Indiana University Press, 2006), *Platonic Legacies* (Sunny, 2004), and *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Indiana University Press, 1996).

Seth Schein is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California at Davis. He works mainly on Homeric epic, Attic tragedy, and the reception of classical literature, and has recently published several essays on Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* and a translation of that play (Focus Classical Library, 2003). His current projects include a commentary on *Philoctetes* and a translation of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*.

Lawrence Venuti, Professor of English at Temple University, is a translation theorist and historian as well as a translator. He is the author of *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (Routledge, 1995) and *The Scandals*

of *Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (Routledge, 1998) and the editor of *The Translator Studies Reader* (Routledge, 2nd edn., 2004). His translations include Antonia Pozzi's *Breath: Poems and Letters* (Wesleyan University Press, 2002), and Massimo Carlotto's thriller *Death's Dark Abyss* (Europa Editions, 2006).

J. Michael Walton is Emeritus Professor of Drama at the University of Hull. He has written a number of books on Greek theatre and was General Editor of Methuen Classical Dramatists in translation, all forty-six plays in thirteen volumes between 1989 and 2003. He has translated eighteen Greek and Roman plays, several in collaboration with Marianne McDonald, and published most recently *Found in Translation: Greek Drama in English* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); also *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* which he edited jointly with McDonald (2007).

Vanda Zajko is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Bristol. She has wide-ranging research interests in the reception of classical literature, particularly in the twentieth century, and in mythology, psychoanalytic theory, and feminist thought. She has published on a variety of ancient authors including Homer, Aeschylus, and Ovid and on Shakespeare, Keats, Ted Hughes, Melanie Klein, James Joyce, Freud, and Mary Shelley. She was co-editor with Miriam Leonard of *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2006) and is currently working on a book for Cambridge University Press on classical literature in translation.

Introduction

Still Being Read after so Many Years: Rethinking the Classic through Translation

Alexandra Lianeri and Vanda Zajko

When Horace in the *Epistles* tied the excellence of a writer to the qualities that allow him to live on for a hundred years after his death he both formulated and interrogated the idea of classical heritage: *est vetus atque probus, centum qui perficit annos*.¹ The proof of classical status, the timeless character of a work, is attained by means of survival in time. On the one hand, the classic is an everlasting possession, an appeal to immortality secured by the assumed permanence of its literary qualities. On the other hand, the idea of timelessness has itself to be established by setting a frontier *within* history, a temporal limit which demonstrates a work's capacity for survival. For it is not merely the excellence of the author, but also the time span imposed by his death that sustains this inaugural category of the classic. In other words, the stark contrast between the boundary posed by death and the ongoing life of the work structures, from the outset, the paradoxical condition for the existence of the classic. This book considers this condition as articulated in the concept and practice of translation. Its largest contention is that translation offers a key entry point of engagement with the question of what is a classic. The idea of the classic as a work which survives its time is grounded on translation as an operation which both manifests historical endpoints and enables their transcendence. The historical boundaries which produce the classic are thus, at one and the same time, inscribed in translation and mediated by it in a way that allows a work to live on and remain meaningful in new linguistic and cultural environments.

We would like to thank Yorgos Avgoustis, Peter Burke, Geoffrey Lloyd, Robin Osborne, and Jim Porter for invaluable comments on previous versions of this chapter. We are also grateful to Stefano Evangelista and the audience of the 'Classical Translations' seminar of the Institute of English Studies of the University of London for an insightful discussion on the subjects of this work.

¹ Horace, *Ep.* 2. 1. 39.

This dual process—the articulation of historical divisions and the mediation of their transcendence—is already exemplified in the constitution of Horace's statement as a 'classic' determination of the classic. Indeed the constitution of the term offers itself a fascinating example of the contradiction it signifies. Its very use thus entails from the outset that any discussion of the classic is already involved with the object it sets out to describe. Terms such as classic or classical,² *locus classicus* and the neologisms classicalness or classicality are not descriptive literary categories designating a stable historical object, but part of a nexus of terms bound up with an already established tradition, the negotiation of our own self-positioning within the limits of this tradition and the conflicts over authority involved in this process. That means that our use of the term 'classic' needs to be considered as both retrospectively formulated and open-ended.

Horace, to whom we have just attributed an inaugural definition of the term, did not yet have a name for the thing he was designating and his concept of the classic differed from the one denoted by our current use of the term. Our ability to make use of his statement is mediated by the history of a term which appeared about two hundred years later in a minor work of the second century AD, Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*, namely *classicus*. Gellius used *classicus* to designate the idea of the model writer. The term was deployed metaphorically and derived from the Servian constitution according to which citizens were divided into five classes on the grounds of property standing. That means that *classicus* drew a direct link between literary and social distinction: 'e cohorte illa dumtaxat antiquiore vel oratorum aliquis vel poetarum, id est classicus adsiduusque aliquis scriptor, non proletarius' (one of the orators or poets, who at least belongs to the older band, that is, a first class and tax-paying author, not a proletarian).³ However, Gellius' metaphor did not play a dominant role in the trajectory of the concept and remained far from establishing a 'classic' definition. The word itself seems not to have been used in the Middle Ages, but was attested again in Renaissance Latin and, shortly afterwards, in the vernaculars.⁴ Still the social connotations of *classicus* were largely silenced after Gellius, even though that effacement was disrupted by the paradox of what we shall later describe as the indeterminable character of classical qualities and objects. Indeed, with the exception of a brief paraphrase of Gellius' passage by Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's essay 'What is a Classic?' in the nineteenth century,⁵ it is only in the last half of the twentieth century that literary criticism has revived the claim of the Antonine

² Unless otherwise noted, the two terms will be used interchangeably throughout the book.

³ Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 19. 8. 15.

⁴ Welleck (1973) i. 452.

⁵ Sainte-Beuve (1971) 83.

scholar by linking the classic to the politics of taste, canon formation, and cultural distinction.⁶

Ernst Robert Curtius aptly notes that the fact that such a basic concept of Western culture as classicism should go back to a Roman writer, known today only to specialists, is more than an interesting philological curiosity. The term's survival, he goes on, illustrates the sway of chance in the history of literary terminology. 'What would modern aesthetics have done for a single general concept,' he asks, a concept 'that should embrace Raphael, Racine, Mozart, and Goethe, if Gellius had never lived?'⁷ A similar question can be asked with regard to the historical investigation of literary and cultural criticism: What is the role of Gellius' coinage in the shaping of the history of the concepts of classicism and the classic? Considering the minor influence of his use of the term, it would seem that Curtius is right in stressing the role of chance as a key factor in its survival. It must be noted, however, that chance emerges here as a viable explanation, because the question is centred on the force of the term's origin. But the most interesting question to ask about the trajectory of *classicus* is not how Gellius' term influenced the history of classicism, but, contrariwise, how classicism constructed its history by appropriating the Latin term and the concept linked to it. From this perspective, we can see that it was not Gellius' term *per se* that lived on to reach the modern age, but *classicus* as it was rewritten and translated into modern languages, including the forms of Latin used in the Renaissance. This process did not involve the recovery of a concept in its original form, but invested that concept with new meaning, which was embedded in the historical settings in which and for which it was reproduced. What we are thus required to explain with regard to Gellius' coinage is not the astonishing course of events that revived an obscure metaphor, but the historical conditions that allowed that metaphor to evolve within Western cultural history. In other words, the object of investigation is not a singular concept, but one that has undergone a series of transformations and evolved to suit a variety of historical circumstances so that, one might argue, it is unrecognizable as what it once was. Our explanatory frames would thus need to account, on the one hand, for a series of concepts, and on the other, for the diverse semantic and temporal relations that brought these concepts together, under one name, in the form of a tradition which determined the category of the classic.

It was within the limits of this tradition formed by translations in a broad sense of the word that Horace's definition could also be given the status of a classic statement about the classic. One of the very first deployments of the

⁶ See especially Guillory (1993).

⁷ Curtius (1953) 250.

term 'classic' in English was attested in Alexander Pope's *Imitations of Horace*, a free rendering of the *Epistles* published together with the original. In that work Pope introduced Horace into the history of classicism by deploying the term that the ancient critic 'lacked'. As he wrote, 'Who last a century can have no flaw, | I hold that Wit a Classic, good in law.'⁸ The full complexity of the relationship between translation and the classic is brilliantly encompassed in this rendering. By using the term that was 'missing' from the original, Pope retrospectively constructed the history of the concept of the classic. In doing so he offered a genealogical definition which later writers, such as Frank Kermode, could subsequently utilize as the starting point for further deliberations on the concept.⁹ The passage thus exemplifies the way that a particular text acquired the status of a classic by making a contribution to the way that category is determined. Hence the temporal status of the ancient concept needs to be seen as one of becoming rather than being. Its classical identity is not a direct manifestation of timelessness, but one that continues to be mediated and configured by changing historical circumstances, which present the construction of the classic as a historical relationship between past and present.

It can be argued, therefore, that the idea of the classic is invested in a particular model of history, one that allows for a perpetual tension between the enduring and the transient and for the survival of the past in ways that are comprehensible even to a radically different present. This comprehensibility is not immediate or unmediated but involves acts of translation by successive generations of readers. But what exactly happens when these acts of translation take place? How does translation negotiate the contradiction between the two mutually oppositional sides of the classic, the timeless and the contingent? Horace's and Gellius' concepts became classical once they were redefined and translated into terms that differed from what they originally were. Their classical identity was therefore established by the move that both effected the death of the concepts in their original form and sustained their survival by means of transformation and change. This implies that the classic manifests itself as a special kind of historical identity formed once the original identity of a cultural work exceeds its own limits by entering the *longue durée* of historical time. Thus the problem posed by translation is not how to choose between the two sides of the concept of the classic, between a culturally bound and a timeless work. It is how to account for a kind of historicity which is both formulated in terms of cultural boundaries and capable of transcending them, a transhistorical identity which manifests itself as change.

⁸ Pope (1993) 2. 1.

⁹ Kermode (1983) 117.

IDENTITY AS CHANGE: THE (UN)TRANSLATABILITY
OF THE CLASSIC

Responding in part to T. S. Eliot's paper 'What is a Classic?' delivered to the Virgil Society in 1944, Kermode's extended essay 'The Classic', with its evocative subtitle 'Literary Images of Permanence and Change', remains itself a *locus classicus* for the exploration of the concept and still sets out what is at stake. For Kermode what is contested is 'a received opinion as to the structure of the past and of its relation to the present'. It is a question of how 'the works of the past may retain identity in change, of the mode in which the ancient presents itself to the modern'. Answers to this question involve both pragmatic and theoretical considerations. Kermode himself offers a workaday definition that distils Horace's argument: classic texts are 'old books which people still read'.¹⁰ Despite its simplicity the proposition manages to communicate a significant starting point. Classic texts are those that continue to be valued by reading communities other than those whose appreciation could have been originally predicted. They carry on speaking, across spatial and temporal boundaries, even to those whose language and culture are different and, despite their dislocation, they persist in appearing both intelligible and significant.

Kermode proposes the formulation that a text would not be recognized as a classic if 'we could not in some way believe it to be capable of saying more than its author meant; even, if necessary, that to say more than he meant was what he meant to do'. The multiplicity of readings is taken to result here from a work's constitutive ambiguity and plenitude, though it is left uncertain whether this trait is for Kermode bound up with the author's intention or comes to light by means of its erasure. At any rate, the category of excessive meaning is extended by him to include the readings produced in different contexts of a work's reception, including its original setting. The survival of the classic, he writes, must depend 'upon its possession of a surplus of signifier', and thus classical texts 'must always signify more than is needed by any one interpreter or any one generation of interpreters'. It is the classic's excess of meaning, he argues, that allows its dislodgement and relocation by means of translations. Thus the latter draw on this potential to articulate, on the one hand, 'transitions from a past to a present system of beliefs, language, generic expectations', and on the other, the continuing 'relevance of a document which has had a good chance of losing it'.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid. 16, 43.

¹¹ Ibid. 80, 140, 117–18.

But what precisely constitutes an identity of excess or plenitude? For Kermode the potential of a text to be opened up by subsequent generations of readers is first to be sought in the text itself, in the indeterminacy of meaning inherent in it and possibly enlarged over time through readers' creative responses to it.¹² This contention goes back to Friedrich Schlegel's assumption of the secrecy of the classic, the assertion that 'a classic text must never be entirely comprehensible. But those who are cultivated and who cultivate themselves must always want to learn more from it.'¹³ However, by linking plenitude to the category of cultivation—an idea that Kermode explicitly endorses¹⁴—Schlegel grounds the classic on concrete rules of taste and interpretation, thus privileging certain readings and excluding others. In other words, the status of a work as a site of cultural plenitude becomes in turn a legitimation of specific meanings and values. Indeed, Schlegel's and Kermode's category may arguably be linked to the interpretation of holy texts, and especially the Protestant approach to the Bible, for which translation both mediated the understanding of secret meaning, that is, meaning that lay behind the words of the text, and imposed a single correct interpretation.¹⁵ Still, as James Porter observes, the 'myth of cultural plenitude', that is, the idea that classical texts are tied to a conception of exclusive affluence and influence, is already inherent in the category of the *classicus* implying that not all those men who belong to the different classes can lay claim to the name, but only those of the first class, who were rated as affluent.¹⁶ Cultural plenitude comes then to signify something other than the ever-expanding potential for rewriting, which Roland Barthes ascribed to the writerly or modern text. The concept rather evokes a hierarchy of attributes and interests, an ideal of classical qualities, which would direct us, for instance, to write anew Homer or Emily Brontë, instead of, say, working-class literary writing, and make our rewritings shift alongside the canonical tastes of an age. Deborah Roberts's essay shows us some of the strategies employed by translators to reconcile their sense of a work as classical with such canonical tastes. The demonstrable variability of classical traditions and the sheer indeterminacy of classical properties and objects¹⁷ suggests that the privileged claim of certain works

¹² Kermode (1983) 134.

¹³ Schlegel (2002) 239.

¹⁴ Kermode (1983) 118.

¹⁵ This link could be strengthened if we consider how debates about the translation of the Bible, especially after Luther's translation, also evoked the interlinking of translatability and untranslatability by contending that the Bible, as Lynne Long (2005) 1–2, observes, both requires and defies translation. We would like to thank Katie Fleming for suggesting the possibility of exploring both conceptual and historical links between the two traditions—a subject that has not yet been adequately investigated, but lies beyond the scope of this book.

¹⁶ Porter (2006) 8–9.

¹⁷ On this issue see Porter (2006).

to being considered classical may arise more from the readers' need for and use of those works as a site of plenitude than the sense that their identity differs fundamentally from others. There has never been complete agreement as to which texts are to count as classics. For Eliot, for instance, Virgil constitutes the type of all classics, closely followed by Dante, and to a lesser extent by Racine—he does not believe that there are any classics in English. But for Matthew Arnold, it was Greece not Rome, and Homer rather than Virgil who embodied 'the modernity' of the true classic. We shall return to the ideological function and political implications of this diversity in the last section.

At this point, however, we need to observe that the rejection of semantic plenitude as an explanation of cultural survival should not imply that classical works are deprived of all their claims to address a culturally different present. The historicization of the ideology of classicism does not quite dispute the potential of cultural works to establish a certain solidarity between the struggles and polemics, the passions and experiences, the forms, structures, and tastes of different ages.¹⁸ Indeed, both the abundance of 'classical' traditions throughout Western and non-Western cultural history and the contradictory forces that are at work in defining classical identities make it difficult to reduce the classic to a mere instrument of propaganda. If the classic is seen as a work that lives on beyond the conditions of its constitution, it is difficult to imagine a culture that does not formulate a 'classical' heritage, either in written or in oral form—and Chinese, Arabic, or Indian classics are only the best-known examples of such traditions outside European history. It may thus be possible to argue that appeals to classical identity and the practical processes that construct the classics are fundamental to the very operation of cultural production. However, this persistence of the classic does not attest to a past text's distinguishing qualities, but to the need of each age to locate itself in time by constructing a genealogical identity that relates the past to the future. Hence in speaking about translation as a mode of engagement with the past, we may consider the classic as dependent on what Paul Ricœur and Antoine Berman have described as the *desire* to translate. This desire, as Ricœur observes, is not to be reduced to an instrumentalist approach to the past. It exists because of the primary need to exceed what is one's own, to broaden the horizon of present meaning and experience¹⁹ and to negotiate a sense of situatedness between the past and the future.

But our use of translation to exemplify this desire disputes the idea of recovering a source text and brings to light a process of interpretation and production of meaning through which the past enters the present, while being

¹⁸ The concept of solidarity is derived from Jameson (1981) 18.

¹⁹ Ricœur (2006) 20–1.

at the same time powerfully expelled from it. For the semantic and cultural relation constructed by translations does not offer a sign of continuity or timelessness, but what Ricœur has described as resistance to the very act performed by translating. The translator, Ricœur writes, encounters this resistance at various stages of his enterprise. He meets with it at a very early stage, as the presumption of non-translatability, the experience of the foreign text as a lifeless block which is impossible to reproduce, since any such attempt will fall short of offering an original. Resistance reaches its peak when the fantasy of perfect translation takes over from this ideal of duplicated original to posit the question of the adequacy of translation and the fear of the translation taking place inevitably as a project of failure.²⁰ Finally, there is the resistance encountered in the frame of the practice of translating, the impossibility of establishing an identity of meaning and form between the works of a culturally different past and that of the present. Berman designated this opposition as the 'test of the foreign' and described translation as the unsettling and reflexive encounter with what lies beyond one's horizon of understanding. In this volume, Lawrence Venuti capitalizes on this notion to stress how the foreign character of the classic reveals a doubleness of trajectory, the 'both and' rather than the 'either or' of modes of describing the relationship established between it and translation. In doing so he demonstrates how the forms of resistance to translation may find their way into the practice of translating. They take shape in a language that alerts readers to the absence of textual properties which endure unaltered throughout the ages, and thus grounds cultural survival in modes of identity that are couched in terms of change.

However, forms of resistance to translation do not prevent translations from taking place. The refusal to translate, as Neville Morley suggests, presented as a resistance of the classical past to appropriation by the present, is not a recognition of historical distinctness but a projection onto that past of a certain image of distinction that is far from being ideologically neutral. In other words, the idea of the untranslatability of the classic is not itself less bound up with a classicism that asserts the uniqueness of certain texts, than the claim that classical works are intrinsically qualified to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. An important insight of translation studies has been that the assumed impossibility of translation is refuted by the very existence of works which are recognized as translations by the communities which produce them and read them, including communities of scholars who investigate the history of translation.²¹ Translation takes place not despite of, but by

²⁰ Ricœur (2006) 5.

²¹ On this issue, see, among others, Toury (1995), Bassnett (1991), Hermans (1985), and Venuti (1995), (2004).

means of boundaries that render it impossible. That is so because such boundaries are themselves articulated through the medium of translation. As John Sallis's essay contends, by investigating the contradictions of the idea of translation as cross-linguistic or cross-cultural transfer throughout Western philosophy, any scheme of historical demarcation of cultures and languages would have to be grounded on translation; for the end of translation is philosophically indeterminable.

Thus the understanding of the classic from the viewpoint of translation challenges the opposition between an everlasting and a multiple identity. As Jo Paul suggests, by focusing on the interlinking of translation and cinematic adaptation sustaining Homer's presence in *Le Mépris*, this challenge is especially evident in forms of intersemiotic translation, whose function as interpretative and culturally located acts sets the site for the re-production of the classics. The act of translating indicates that the quality of works that become classics lies in the constitution of survival as a form of negotiation of the gap between past and present meaning. In the words of Dan Hooley, it is 'an inherently creative act paradoxically reaching out to, attempting to incorporate, something no longer there'. It therefore implies that the question to ask about cultural survival is not the familiar opposition between the timeless and the historical, but the co-articulation of these categories in a way that each one of them, as we shall see, both sustains and endangers the other.

TRANSLATION AND THE HISTORICAL TEMPORALITIES OF THE CLASSIC

Each of these categories draws support from a corresponding trait in established considerations of the notion of the classic. Thus the idea of translation that claims to move a work across the ages evokes what Hans-Georg Gadamer has called the normative side of the classics: a consciousness of something enduring, of significance that lives on and is independent of the shifting of time, 'a kind of timeless present that is capable of becoming contemporaneous with every other present'. By contrast, the second category corresponds to what Gadamer describes as the historical side of the classical tradition: the concept of works representing a certain period of time and a certain phase of historical development (as exemplified, for instance in the stylistic and conceptual character of art, literature, or philosophy in fifth-century Athens), but not a suprahistorical value.²²

²² Gadamer (1989) 288.

This conflictual structure has frequently been considered as positing a choice between timelessness and historical contingency. Kermode has argued, for instance, that the doctrine of classic as model entails the assumption that past cultural production can be more or less immediately relevant and available, that the classic can be in a sense contemporaneous with the present. When this assumption is questioned and rejected, he goes on, the whole idea of the classic as transhistorical model is being disrupted.²³ In other words, the consciousness of time articulated by the two sides of the classic implies that the concept is itself contradictory. Its normative side stands against the historical one in such a way that the concept cannot attain a peaceful identity of the self with the self. Translation stems from and confirms this contradiction: the necessity of translation indicates that no aspect of the classic can survive in the present in an unmediated form; while, at the same time, the very existence of translations affirms that it is impossible simply to repudiate the idea of cultural survival. However, the sense of time entailed by the category of translation takes the question of the classic a step beyond the juxtaposition of the concept's constitutive parts. For while the encounter of these parts, especially in European thought, has invited attempts to resolve the contradiction by prioritizing one of them over the other, translation points towards a mediation indicating that each of these sides is already implied by the other.

The challenge to the exemplarity of the classic brings to light a dimension of time that is unrepeatable and thus unable to sustain the survival of works that take shape within its limits. The emergence of this consciousness of time in Europe has been set as far back as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the political and historiographical thought of the civic humanist tradition of the Italian city states. John Pocock has traced in this context a form of historicism for which the turn to antiquity defined political life, and life in the city-state in particular, as transcendent in terms of its aim to realize for citizens all the values that people are capable of realizing, and at the same time particular, in the sense that it is finite, located in space and time.²⁴ Yet both the civic humanist endeavour and the cultural engagement with the classics that took shape in the same period confined the contradiction of the classic to a notion of cyclical history, in which the distance between the past and the present found its place within a scheme of recurrence and rebirth.²⁵ The civic humanist turn to political antiquity, mediated as it was by Polybius' circular succession of regimes, defined the finitude of the city-state in terms of its rise and fall as an exemplary regime, although the attempt to revive antiquity led

²³ Kermode (1983) 16–17.

²⁴ Pocock (2003a).

²⁵ On this issue see Jauss (2005).

to a certain consciousness of the gulf between past and present and on occasion the inapplicability of ancient experience to modern times.²⁶ Likewise, the Renaissance idea of literature and the arts served to delimit a new epoch by evoking the birth, demise, and revival of an exemplary cultural production, traced from antiquity through the newly defined Middle Ages to the Renaissance itself. Thus while both fields articulated the erasure of a cultural work or practice from the field of history, they affirmed the timelessness of normative classics by inserting them in the cycle of engendering, death, and resurrection.

It was only by the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth that classical tradition was set against the modern in a way that allowed the idea of the classic explicitly to accommodate the category of unrepeatable time. At the onset of this period, the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* offered the first serious challenge to the transhistorical model of antiquity and the first intellectual framework which elaborated a resolution to the ensuing contradiction of the classic. The outcome of the quarrel, in both France and England, was the construction of a new category which modified the temporal sense of the classic, namely the 'relative classic': the work whose perfection had to be appraised by standards pertaining to its age, rather than universal ones.²⁷ For the first time, in the words of Fred Parker, the classical was 'perhaps to be illuminated through scholarship but not to be grasped through empathy' and the coinage concluded the conflict by offering a common ground wherein the two combatants would meet with one another. It allowed the *modernes* to challenge the claim that antiquity was unique in prescribing classical properties and the *anciens* to defend the divergence of the Greek and Roman past from classicism's dominant preferences. Yet its significance for the semantics of the concept of the classic lies elsewhere. The 'relative classic' offered for the first time a clear index of the contradiction between the normative and the historical side of the classic. Set alongside the absolute classic, the new category articulated a tension which could then be traced retrospectively to all previous instantiations of the concept going back to Longinus,²⁸ and would lead in the following centuries to the gradual dismantling and negation of antiquity's timeless status.

To speak of the classic as a relative category would thus entail a semantic transformation that would move antiquity beyond the status of the model to be recovered by imitation and prepare for the historicist image that was to dominate literary and historiographical appraisals in the nineteenth century.

²⁶ On the theme of 'rise and fall' see Pocock (2003*b*).

²⁷ Jauss (2005) 345, and Levine (1991).

²⁸ On this issue see Curtius (1953) 380–404.

However, the new concept did not quite allow for the mediation of the contradiction between the historical and the normative classic, but prescribed instead a forceful resolution. The position that ancient and modern times were, in the realm of culture, distinct from one another, while also both being privileged claimants to the label 'classical' presupposed a determination of the concept in terms that stood beyond the historical fields in which it was realized. To be sure, this move was not centred on defining some concrete properties of the classic that would be found in all ages. For such properties were now set by the traditions of both the ancients and the moderns and would prove to be incompatible with each other. The act of definition rather took shape on the level of the epistemological assumptions of the comparison itself: the presumed neutrality of the perspective that sustained the choice of the specific parts to be compared to one another: Graeco-Roman antiquity and the modern European tradition. In this connection, Hans Robert Jauss has aptly spoken of a 'point of perfection', a standard of comparison that made it possible for the quarrel to bring together, under one category, cultural forms and practices confined exclusively to European culture. In other words, the terms of a resolution were prescribed by a transhistorical idea of the classic that was presupposed to the choice and appraisal of specific historical articulations of classical perfection. The positing of this concept resolved the contradiction of the classic by constructing a special link between Greek and Roman antiquity and modern Europe, as the two distinct and yet privileged classical models. But this move, as Marcel Detienne has argued, could not be founded on a neutral historical judgement. It involved the construction of comparables and thus defined by implication the range of the 'incomparable': the traditions expunged from the boundaries of the classic.²⁹ The 'relative classic' arose on the condition that it found its place within a frame of comparable cultures, each of which conformed to the unifying transhistorical quality that defines the normative classic.

It is precisely this quality, the concept of the classic that sustains an exclusive relationship between antiquity and European modernity, that is challenged by the operation of translation. Translations sustain this challenge by shifting attention from a comparative appraisal of cultures that are selectively brought together in the frame of critical analysis to the constitution of the classic as an open-ended *relation* between cultures that engage with one another on a global level. There is no historical community which can be expunged from the field of translation. The route for the construction of the classics thus ceases to be confined to a set of standards claimed by certain historical epochs and becomes an interaction between every cultural

²⁹ Detienne (2000).

community engaging with another, including that of the critic or historian. In other words translation displaces the classic from the history of single cultures or epochs reaching their limits and puts it within a frame of world history wherein different limits and standards are opposed to one another. Such a contention requires a radical transformation of the comparative frame of privileged cultural moments and its replacement by a sense of time that sustains a continuously diversified and diversifying narration of classical identity. It may thus be said that an approach to the classic through the history of translations goes beyond a temporality which spatializes time by assuming a static endpoint of each epoch³⁰ without simultaneously recognizing how such limits are also violated by translation, including the forms of translation which allow the analyst to articulate their existence. Discussing this phenomenon of the ‘translational series’, Richard Armstrong suggests that ‘in its vertical and horizontal orientations, it is inherently Janus-faced, looking both to the past and the present’.

The spatialization of time implied by the relative classic is crystallized in the association, posited by Kermode, between classics and empire—the concept which, ever since Polybius, has identified the spatial limits of imperial expansion with the narrative limits of history writing. Engaging with Eliot’s distinction between the universal classic and that which is only such in relation to works in its own language,³¹ Kermode contends that the former of these categories is grounded on the expansive logic of the empire. It is not a coincidence, he explains, that Eliot chose Virgil as the true example of a universal classic. Underpinning it was the Virgilian prophecy of the *imperium sine fine*, the perceived destiny of Rome as the historical moment that bore within it the potential of universality: the classic which sustained the infinite expansion of its origin through the act of reiteration—the recognition of Virgil as a universal.³² But the empire without an end is not a temporal category, even though imperial expansion formally takes place in the course of time. The idea of empire implies that the metropolitan centre—Rome—establishes itself as a centre of political and cultural authority, the culture that defines an all-inclusive destiny of language and history as the spreading out of something that was there, fully shaped from the beginning. Eliot defined this destiny as the freezing of time under the aegis of maturity and civility, the accomplishment of a final point and the conquest of all possibilities of transformation and change. ‘If there is one word on which we can fix, which will suggest the maximum of what I mean by the term “a classic,”’ he writes, ‘it is the word *maturity*.’³³ However, it is impossible to sustain this idea

³⁰ On this issue see Lefebvre (1991).

³¹ Eliot (1945) 10.

³² Kermode (1983) 25.

³³ Eliot (1945) 10.

of maturity, as applied to the universal classic, once we set it against the dependence of the operation of translation. The ‘mature’ state of language and culture, purportedly achieved by the metropolitan centre and confirmed through its expansion, requires a process that is more than mere reiteration and transfer. Texts that become classics move into the periphery through the act of translation. Yet this act, far from asserting the finality of the classic, raises questions about who does the moving, what forms of gain and loss are involved in this process, and how translating communities actively contribute to this becoming. Thus even concepts that are supposedly globalized, such as modernity or postmodernity, and centres of culture that have claimed for themselves a worldly authority, turn out to be local and indeed provincial.³⁴ Lorna Hardwick, in this volume, probes the history of post-colonial translation of Western classics to demonstrate how the act of translating, far from endorsing the stability of the classic, posits it in a constantly renewable state of beyond, a condition of transformation that could always materialize differently in the future.

Still this state of transformation does not imply an idea of historicity that confines classics and translations to various originating moments. Or at least it cannot do so without simultaneously denouncing the category of the classic. Nietzsche saw this clearly when he attempted a declassicization of the Greeks and contrasted the classic to the foreign: ‘One does not learn from the Greeks—their manner is too foreign, and too fluid, to have an imperative, a classical effect.’³⁵ In other words, it is not possible to continue to speak of the classic without maintaining some sense of its transhistorical side, the normative aspect of the classical effect. Classical scholarship has been aware of this condition since Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff’s 1921 *Geschichte der Philologie* polemically—but also reluctantly—omitted the epithet that qualified his discipline.³⁶ In many ways this omission dominated twentieth-century scholarship as a gradual dismantling of the normative classic. As was noted in a recent edition of Wilamowitz’s work, the term ‘classic’ rings more hollow than ever today and hence ‘we are all the more open to Wilamowitz’s farsighted project of an “unclassical antiquity,” against which philology and history counterbalance and complement one another.’³⁷ However, this historicizing move has left us with an aporia centred on the very question of historical consciousness. If, as Gadamer notes, ‘only the part of the past that is not past offers the possibility of historical knowledge’,³⁸ is it

³⁴ On the role of translation in attempts at provincializing European history see Chakrabarty (2000) and Liu (1995).

³⁵ Nietzsche (1982) 557. ³⁶ Porter (2006) 1.

³⁷ Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1998) 93. ³⁸ Gadamer (1989) 289.

possible to abandon the idea of cultural survival without simultaneously erasing the potential for historical knowledge? Is there a consciousness of history, if that consciousness is closed to past voices and unable to make them continue to speak in the present?

A response to these questions would require us to qualify the binarism of the opposition between the normative and the historical classic in a way that the tension between them remains unresolved. Gadamer maintains that ‘the classical epitomises a general characteristic of historical being: preservation amid the ruins of time’. It is timeless in the sense that it survives across historical ages. And yet this timelessness is a mode of historical being, on which the knowledge of history is preconditioned.³⁹ It is precisely this duality that is codified by subjecting the classic to the operation of translation: the variety of voices through which the classic enters the course of history is, at one and the same time, an index of its specificity and the realization of its timelessness, that is to say, its potential for cultural survival. Or conversely, the untimeliness of classics founds both their embeddedness in their historical moment and their potential to transcend it. Translation, Johan Geertsema argues, engaging with J. M. Coetzee’s idea of the classic, allows us to ask in a meaningful way what remains of the classic after classical works have been historicized and confined to place and time. And the answer to this question lies in the relation—intrinsic to translation—between the two sides of the classic. Nietzsche indicated this interlinking when he claimed that the classic acquires its status because of its untimeliness. As he wrote, ‘I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of time to come.’⁴⁰ The declassification of antiquity implied by Nietzsche’s contrast between the classic and the foreign is completed here by the positing of untimeliness as a trait that sustains a work’s transhistorical status. But ‘untimeliness’ requires translation in order to be manifested as such throughout time. This condition not only makes translations a privileged field in which to study the peculiar historicity of texts that survive in time; it also indicates how these texts can become sites of a critical and reflexive move that is parallel to the classic’s dominant and imperialist status. In this connection Andrew Benjamin turns to Hölderlin’s *Das Höchste* to explore how the politics of the work, and specifically the interpretation it suggests of the link between law and violence indicated in the original, stems from the relationship between the finite and the infinite constituted by translation. It is this relation that allows the classics to offer modes of resistance to dominant world-views even at moments when they seem to be appropriated and adapted to the cultural frame of their reception.

³⁹ Ibid. 289–90, 284.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche (1983) 60.

THE POLITICAL IMPERATIVE OF TRANSLATION

Azzedine Haddour reminds us, by focusing on the Arabic translation of Greek classics, that the history of translation needs to be viewed as a multidirectional rather than linear development, taking shape within the field of a world culture. His chapter argues for the need to reinstate the non-Western mediation of the Greek and Roman traditions which the West has defined as classic by appropriating them and confining them to a thread of history which linked them directly to the European modern era. This contention sets out a key theoretical perspective and a limit for this project. The book aims both to challenge the coherence of the Western reception of the classics and dismantle the univocity of the category of the classic; yet it does so by focusing on the inner contradictions of the Western classical tradition and thus setting beyond its scope the constitution of non-Western classics—a choice prescribed no less by pragmatic reasons than by the need to achieve a relatively unified theoretical and historical perspective. Within this frame, it argues that translation involves a multiplicity of directions, none of which can be privileged over the others, as each of them stems from the same principle of the heterogeneity of tongues. Such a condition, Charles Martindale suggests on the grounds of an idea of translation drawing on Kantian aesthetics, has a political dimension that goes beyond the strict historicization of the classics. Indeed, the call to translate, to paraphrase Ricœur, is an ethical and political project for a post-Babel humanity, a vital means of negotiating linguistic and cultural alterity. In this, as well as the temporal dimension, it is open-ended—translation of the classic establishes its identity on the grounds of a limitless interlinking of incomparables, a dynamic reconstitution of a work which potentially includes every human culture and tongue. This potential of the classic to belong to everyone, to function as a transcultural marker of value and appeal to the ‘citizen of the world’, involves a cosmopolitanism that cuts across national identities and idioms. But such cosmopolitanism is complex because the consensus it articulates can be seen as a violent disavowal of difference as well as an enabling mediation of diversity.

The history of cosmopolitanism is emplotted, more often than not, as having its origin in the ancient world, in Stoic or Cynic philosophy, Herodotus or sometimes even Homer, and its trajectory is mapped via Kant and the European Enlightenment.⁴¹ As such it can be regarded as a Western or ‘First World’ construct and criticized for its elitist preoccupations. Julia

⁴¹ See e.g. Appiah (2006), 3; Cronin (2006), 6–9; Brekenridge et al. (2002), 1; Vertovec and Cohen (2002) 5, 14–16; Derrida (2001) *passim*.

Kristeva has argued, for example, that from its inception cosmopolitanism was a flawed project since it sought to extend the ideal of the *polis* to encompass the entire world, forcing other peoples to find their place within it. It emerged from the core of a global movement that abolished laws, differences, and prohibitions and in doing so it challenged ‘the founding prohibitions of established society and perhaps of sociality itself.’⁴² Although this charge can be refuted by resisting the urge to homogenize the concept, and by pointing instead to the plural cosmopolitanisms that originated in, and take account of, alternative cultural traditions, the status of cosmopolitanism as an ethical and political project is fiercely contested. Whether it is conceived as a sociocultural condition, an academic discipline, a mode of political praxis, or a state of mind, it has become an important topic in contemporary debates about universalism, multiculturalism, and identity politics. These debates are profoundly implicated in definitions of the classic. The so-called ‘canon wars’ of the 1980s and 1990s were fought in part over the criteria that qualified texts to be counted as part of a national literature. The curricula that subsequently emerged aimed to be more representative of the diverse cultural groups within national communities and to recognize the claims of these groups to a distinctive institutional presence. Literary texts came to be regarded as expressing something of particular racial, ethnic, sexual, or gendered identities rather than of ideas and values that could be assumed relevant or reflective of human beings more generally. And, in addition, the assertion of such relevance was discredited as a form of cultural imperialism that projected a false universality of world culture at the expense of specific local mores. The idea that an individual work could provide a nation, in the words of Michael Cronin, with ‘the cultural alibi of literary excellence’⁴³ began to be found suspect and in its place there developed an emphasis on the awareness of the idiosyncratic qualities of smaller-scale literary traditions and a sense of the accountability of the cultural critic who plays a role in deciding which texts are read and by whom.⁴⁴ In this volume, Dimitris Maronitis explores the terms of this critique and its implications for translation practice by discussing the national and cultural politics involved in intralingual translation from ancient into modern Greek.

But nowhere have the complexities of these developments been more explicitly articulated in recent years than in the debates surrounding post-colonial writing and literary translation. Within these debates the political and ethical responsibilities of the translator have taken centre-stage as the

⁴² Kristeva (1991) 60. ⁴³ Cronin (2006) 31.

⁴⁴ See e.g. Bloom (1987), (1995); Gorak (1991); Martindale (1996) 109–17.

ramifications of the analogy between colonization and translation have been explored. It is not only a matter of pointing to the covert (and sometimes not so covert) power dynamics between one language and another, between one national literature and another, but also of excavating the ideologies that underpin their potency. For systems of evaluation, far from being value-neutral, can themselves be regarded as complicit in grander narratives of territorial expansion and appropriation. If the texts that have been designated as classics conventionally come from within the European tradition and can be seen as implicated in that tradition's colonial engagement with the rest of the world, the discourse of defining, contemplating, and querying them is grounded in the same tradition. Here we can see a parallel with the discourse of cosmopolitanism to the extent that it is outlined above: in both cases the aestheticized assumptions of value within a particular tradition are reaffirmed and propagated by reading practices which originate in the same cultural space and literary texts themselves are empowered to function as authoritative sites of self-fashioning at a whole variety of individual and collective levels.

The idea of this kind of empowerment underpins the multiculturalist project which, arguably, is grounded in a politics of identity, advocating a celebration of diversity, but working with a model which takes rather for granted the priority of ethnocentric relations. A multiculturalist canon embraces the idea that other cultural formations, aside from the European West, have produced other classics, and it welcomes a globalized cultural economy that encourages ever-increasing traffic between different areas of the world, and, given the huge increases in migration, within the boundaries of the nation-states whose 'post-ethnic' profiles become ever more rich and complex. If we compare this with cosmopolitanism as a political, intellectual, and ethical endeavour, there are considerable overlaps in terms of the sense of relishing an open-ended broadening of multi-perspectival cultural horizons, but there is perhaps a significant difference in terms of the way that identity itself is conceived. The many 'branches' of cosmopolitanism share above all a resistance to oversimplistic narrations of identity that deny or downplay the capacity of individuals to choose changing, multifaceted, partial, and sometimes contradictory affiliations. Such affiliations make it hard to talk about literary texts as 'representative of', or 'belonging to' a particular cultural group because they might rather be representative of some aspects of some members of that group, only some of the time.

So what of the role of the translator in such circumstances? Within a post-colonial economy the translator is intimately involved in negotiating the historically determined configurations of power between languages which, due for example to global economic circumstances and disparities in the means of production of knowledge, often continue to shape transactions in

the present.⁴⁵ Within a context which is more aware of, or more concerned to emphasize, the transience and partiality of linguistic (amongst other) identities, might the role of the translator itself need to be reconceived in order to take account of intersecting and shifting global and local perspectives? There is certainly a sense in which all translators could be described as ‘cosmopolitans’ in that they must be mobile, open, and responsive to the nuances of other cultures and willingly endure experiences of cultural disorientation. But is this perhaps to paint an overly optimistic picture and too readily accept a generally progressivist view?

The account given above which sees nationalist hierarchies ceding to a multiculturalism that is now in turn evolving into multiple cosmopolitanisms is not the only way of telling this particular tale. It would be equally possible to think of the three discourses coexisting and competing, and indeed, to a theorist of cosmopolitanism this intricacy might seem more persuasive. Debates still rage about the need for, and desirability of, a refined concept of universalism as a potential means of mediating between the global and the particular: Cronin, for example, compares the old-fashioned transcendent universalism of ‘cultural immobility’ with an imminent universalism which centres on the idea of potential.⁴⁶ And the paradox of the utopian vision of cosmopolitanism may seem to depend both upon projecting some sense of transcultural value and on retaining a respect for the singular location, on mediating, in other words, between brutalizing homogeneity and the absence of solidarity between individuals. If we think about this paradox from the perspective of translation we might conclude that the ideal of the classic as embodying universal, translatable values produces analogous effects: in assuming that cultural value is transferable from one context to another it potentially subsumes the distinctive qualities of languages, nationalities, and social groups and the role of a work within a particular literary tradition is effaced. In this instance its meaning may become so dilute and one-dimensional that it becomes indistinguishable from any and every other work. On the other hand, if the worth of a text within a ‘micro-context’ is overstressed, it may only be possible for it to signify in parochial, incommunicable ways that hold little value for audiences other than the immediate. One might argue that it is precisely in the processes of negotiating, challenging, and affirming cultural differences that the classic asserts its status as a classic: it is only these processes, integral both to the practices of translation and of cosmopolitanism, that enable the classic to become visible as a classic and to continue to signify as such.

⁴⁵ On translation and post-colonialism see Simon and St-Pierre (2000); Tymoczko (1999); Bassnett and Trivedi (1999).

⁴⁶ Cronin (2006) 30.

At this stage, as Coetzee's discussion of translation practice suggests, we should remember that we are discussing not only theoretical positions, but also pragmatic strategies that shape the experiences of individuals within numerous institutional contexts. Within the theatre, for example, Michael Walton discusses how the emergence of the director as interpreter led to an interrogation of playtexts as 'working potential' rather than 'completed artefacts' and initiated the practice of performing classical plays in a contemporary context. The pedagogic implications of the need for mediation between extremes of familiarity and difference, comfort and alienation, as outlined above, are nowhere clearer than when attempting to justify either the retention of 'old classics' on existing curricula or the adoption of 'new classics' which might threaten the status quo. Hardwick discusses in her essay how translations (in the broadest sense) of Greek and Roman texts both assert the notion of the classic—since translation typically ascribes value to the source, and yet subvert it—since translations remake texts for new situations and therefore change perceptions of that source. She works with the concept of hybridity, a term that has emerged from the debates we have been discussing, to contest the simple opposition between the old and the new and she develops a spatial metaphor to suggest that the situation of these hybrid texts, occupying previously 'empty sites' in and between cultures, can generate transformation of cultural, temporal, and aesthetic relationships. It cannot be assumed that they either reinforce existing social and political divisions and prop up old hierarchies, or play a role in forming counter-cultures and sustain resistance to dominant and oppressive political ideologies. They may do either, or they may do both, but all kinds of cultural interventions by artists, filmmakers, writers, and poets, as well as by those in the teaching professions, seem to spring from both the freedoms and the restrictions that a sense of a tradition entails.

Metaphors of miscegenation, cross-fertilization, and interstitiality are frequently used to help articulate the 'both and' conditions of cultural exchange. Not everyone is as sanguine about their usefulness as Hardwick—Peter van der Veer, for example, urges that the celebration of hybridity needs always to be critically examined, suggesting it can be regarded as a form of colonial modernity refigured⁴⁷—but they do seem to facilitate the description of, or perhaps more accurately the imagining of, human interactions unmarred by the abuse of power. Recent debates about the ownership of classic texts have tended, as we have seen, to emphasize the hegemony of the Western literary tradition in relation to emergent literatures and the status of different languages relative to each other, but Hall's chapter provokes us to consider a time

⁴⁷ van der Veer (2002), 165–80, *passim*.

when such disputes were centred in the main on issues of class, gender, and access to education. It forcefully puts the case for regarding translations themselves as an access route into the classics and reminds us of the market for them in the past outside an educated elite. In contemporary Britain, as elsewhere in the world, the decline of the teaching of Latin and Greek in schools has led to the need for Classics as a subject-area in universities to rethink its role now that so many courses are taught primarily, or indeed exclusively, through the medium of modern-language translations. Seth Schein discusses the implications of this practice at length in his chapter and shows how once again considerations on a local level of who in practice has access to a publicly venerated tradition have become very pressing. One response might be of the hand-wringing variety, and recourse to narratives of despair and decline. This volume, however, could be considered timely in pointing to more upbeat scenarios. Practical factors, to be sure, such as the availability of classic(al) texts in affordable and accessible editions, will continue to play an important part in their dissemination and enjoyment by readers. But a historical awareness of the phenomenon of the classic testifies to 'its' capacity to regenerate, mutate, and survive. We should perhaps be less fearful that the texts we value will not endure even if, in their future manifestations, we ourselves might not recognize them.

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I

Theorizing Translation and the Classic

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1

Translation, Interpretation, Canon Formation

Lawrence Venuti

A CONCEPT OF THE CLASSIC

Even the most cursory reading of publishers' catalogues confirms that the foreign-language texts we call 'classics' do not merely attract translation, but eventually, when their copyright expires, become subject to multiple *retranslations*, as publishers scramble to transform the cultural capital those texts have acquired into economic capital. Nonetheless, it can be argued that translation functions as one cultural practice through which a foreign text attains the status of a classic: the very fact of translation not only implies that the text has been judged valuable enough to bring into another culture, but also increases this value by generating such promotional devices as jacket copy, endorsements, and advertisements and by enabling such diverse modes of reception as reviews, course adoptions, and scholarly research.¹ 'Classical masterpieces', Maurice Blanchot shrewdly observed, 'live only in translation.'²

To investigate these circular relations between translation and value, a concept of the classic must first be formulated, and Frank Kermode's examination of the topic offers a suggestive point of departure. 'The books we call classics', Kermode feels, 'possess intrinsic qualities that endure, but possess also an openness to accommodation which keeps them alive under endlessly varying dispositions.'³ This 'openness to accommodation' is a capacity to support multiple interpretations over time: the classic text is 'complex and indeterminate enough to allow us our necessary pluralities.'⁴ Kermode's

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¹ See Casanova (2004).

² Blanchot (1990) 84.

³ Kermode (1975) 44.

⁴ *Ibid.* 121.

emphasis is placed squarely on the text itself, effectively excluding the reader and the social situation in which reading occurs. He develops his argument by analysing Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, describing himself as 'a competent modern reader' able to entertain generic 'expectations' and thematic 'indeterminacies' apart from 'institutional constraint'.⁵ Yet this description is misleading. The mere choice of *Wuthering Heights* for a case study links the classic to academic institutions, where more often than not readers first encounter Brontë's novel, and this link is reinforced by a reading practice that treats the text as a complex and indeterminate object. Kermode fails to see that if these textual features are the defining characteristics of the classic, then any cultural object can be so classified—provided it is submitted to an academic theoretical or critical discourse that locates and prizes those features. For him, the classic is 'an essence' inherent in some texts rather than others, but his invocation of a poststructuralist 'surplus of the signifier' undermines his essentialism by revealing that his academic reading practice is constitutive of both the text and its value.⁶

In the opposing view I wish to present here, it is one thing to assert that texts possess intrinsic qualities—I believe they do—but another, very different thing to assert that these qualities endure in the sense of remaining unchanged: they do not. The 'varying dispositions' to which Kermode refers amount to substantive changes if by 'dispositions' we mean a plurality of interpretations. When a classic is translated, furthermore, its very nature as a linguistic and literary artefact is fundamentally altered, along with the value it had acquired in the foreign culture where it was produced. In translation a foreign text may well lose its native status as a classic and wind up not only unvalued, but unread and out of print.

The formal and thematic features of any text can constitute no more than the first set of parameters within which it is received. And even here variation is at work: a formal feature such as genre is always 'emergent historically', constructed by a commentator to serve a specific interpretative occasion, so that the intrinsic qualities that define a tragedy or a ballad, as well as the manifestation of these qualities in a particular text, can change in accordance with a different interpretation.⁷ This means that the reception of a text is shaped less decisively by its intrinsic qualities than by the cultural and social identities of its readers, the varying assumptions and expectations, interests and abilities they bring to their interaction with the text. This interaction, although in the first instance a psychological and cognitive experience, is overdetermined by the cultural institutions and social situations in which it

⁵ Kermode (1975) 117, 118, 119–20, 128.

⁶ *Ibid.* 140, 141.

⁷ Stewart (1991) 108.

unfolds, which inform and regulate it by providing and permitting certain interpretative methods and interpreted meanings while excluding others. In these institutions and situations, meaning and value are ‘mutually dependent’, reciprocally creating and justifying each other so as to be virtually inseparable: to interpret a text is to evaluate it positively as signifying a meaning that deserves to be formulated as an interpretation, even when the ultimate evaluation is negative.⁸ The text has been judged worthy of interpretation.

The intrinsic qualities of a classic text, then, do not endure unchanged since they are not comprehended and evaluated in the same way in every time and place. Nor does a classic text display a particular openness to the thickly mediated reception I have been sketching. Any text can come to be designated as a classic according to an interpretation of varying complexity performed by a cultural constituency in some historical period, as have Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and John Le Carré’s *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*—not to mention *Superman* comic books and ‘Classics Illustrated’, comic adaptations of texts that appear in scholarly canons. Not only did Classics Illustrated adapt canonical texts to a comic form, but these comics are now considered classics themselves by collectors and students of the form, particularly because the series was discontinued in the 1960s.

I shall construe the term ‘classic’ as essentially an assignment of value to a text or, more precisely, a decision as to its canonicity based on a particular interpretation of that text. This evaluative decision is not only influenced by, but influences, the cultural and social sites where it is made, and so it carries a complex significance for the constituencies who make it. The circle of interpretation and evaluation that constitutes classic texts is always contingent on a set of variables that are at once personal and cultural, social and historical.

The cultural power of translation is uniquely revealed when we consider its role in the canonization of a foreign text in the receiving situation. A translation contributes to this canonizing process by inscribing the foreign text with an interpretation that has achieved currency and in most cases dominance in academic or other powerful cultural institutions. This interpretation will reflect the comprehension and evaluation of the foreign text in the foreign culture in so far as the translation works on the formal and thematic features of that text and somehow incorporates the particular foreign literary traditions in which it emerged as well as the foreign critical categories with which it was received. At the same time, however, the interpretation that the translator inscribes will also revise the foreign comprehension and evaluation of the text in so far as the translator inevitably puts to

⁸ Herrnstein Smith (1988) 10–11.

work patterns of linguistic usage, literary traditions and effects, and cultural values in the receiving situation, possibly in an effort to address specific readerships.

In contributing to the canonicity of a foreign text, the translation leaves neither that text nor the receiving situation unaltered. The foreign text undergoes a radical transformation in which it comes to support a range of meanings and values that may have little or nothing to do with those it supported in the foreign culture. And the linguistic choices, literary traditions and effects, and cultural values that comprise the translator's interpretation may reinforce or revise the understanding and evaluation of the foreign text that currently prevail in the receiving situation, consolidating readerships or forming new ones in the process.

My aim in what follows is primarily twofold: to clarify, as precisely as possible, the sense in which a translation can be said to inscribe an interpretation in a foreign text, not only whether but how it does so; and to interrogate, as incisively as my cases will permit, the evaluation that coincides with this interpretation, with particular attention to the role played by translation in establishing or maintaining the canonicity of a foreign text in the receiving situation.

TRANSLATION AS INTERPRETATION: METALANGUAGE

The interpretative dimension of translation can be most clearly seen if we rely on a semiotic approach, viewing language as a system of signs that each consist of a relation between an acoustic or graphematic signifier and a conceptual signified. Two basic orders of signification are involved in translating: the first order is formed by the signs comprising the foreign text, which when translated functions as the signified or meaning of the second-order system established by the translation (see Fig. 1.1). A translation is thus what Roland Barthes calls a 'metalanguage', where one language takes another language as its object.⁹

Perhaps the most common example of a metalanguage is a technical terminology. The technical term is a signifier with its own signified, a word with a definable meaning, typically a general definition of some object, process, or practice. When the term is applied to a description of a specific technical phenomenon or, in other words, to another chain of signifiers with their own signifieds, it becomes a metalanguage or second-order signification

⁹ Barthes (1968) 92.

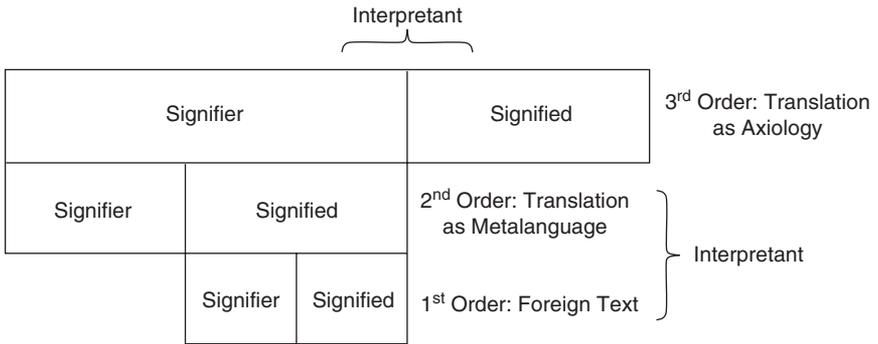


Figure 1. Translation and the orders of signification: metalanguage and axiology.

in relation to the first order constituted by the specific description. Thus the signified of the term ‘metaphor’ might be formulated as the definition, ‘an analogy without the use of “like” or “as”’. When ‘metaphor’ is applied to an actual use of language, to a descriptive phrase such as ‘my love is a red, red rose’, where each word carries its own meaning, the term functions as a metalanguage: ‘metaphor’ becomes the signifier of another sign, a chain of signifiers joined to their signifieds so as to constitute a specific use of metaphor. For Barthes, one way of distinguishing between a language and a metalanguage is that a language ultimately refers to some real state of affairs, regardless of the fact that any reference or representation is always mediated by various forms of signification, whereas a metalanguage refers only to another linguistic practice.¹⁰

The relation between the signifier and the signified in any sign has usually been regarded as ‘arbitrary’ in so far as this relation is not intrinsic, not based on a resemblance or shared characteristics, but rather conventional, based on collective usage over time.¹¹ Hence onomatopoeic words, where the acoustic signifier is said to resemble the signified, vary from one language to another according to structural differences and linguistic conventions (a dog ‘bow-wows’ in English, but ‘abbaia’ in Italian). The conventionality of the linguistic sign ensures that the relation between signifier and signified is variable, subject to changes in patterns of use and deliberate manipulation as well as unconscious or unintended effects. Yet the signified is itself a fragile construct: it is the product of differences along a chain of signifiers—graphematic, phonological, grammatical, lexical differences—so that it is never a stable or unchanging essence attached to a signifier, but always destabilized and dependent on interpretation, needing to be fixed in specific contexts and potentially

¹⁰ Barthes (1972*b*) 258.

¹¹ Barthes (1968) 50–1.

proliferating, since the signifying chain is interpreted through linkages to other signifiers, other texts, other contexts.¹²

In metalanguages, the relation between signifier and signified is likely to be even more conventional than ordinary language use. Although in some fields and disciplines (e.g. law, medicine, the natural sciences), this relation may be standardized and therefore unchanging, it is often fixed by what I shall call an *interpretant*, a pattern of use in a cultural practice that is performed and regulated within a social institution.¹³ A metalanguage can of course be put to other uses and acquire other meanings, even if its institutional situation and function work to link its signifiers repeatedly to the same signifieds. The meaning of the term ‘metaphor’ has thus been determined by its use in a range of academic disciplines over the course of centuries, including rhetoric, literary criticism, linguistics, and philosophy. Yet these disciplines have each elaborated the definition of the term according to their specific research methodologies and agendas in the context of ongoing debates.

When the metalanguage is not terminology, but commentary or criticism, and its language object is not a phrase or sentence, but an entire text, the relation between the two orders of signification is more complex and unstable. The interpretant may then be derived from various theoretical discourses—linguistic and formalist, philosophical and historicist, psychoanalytic and political—whose selection, combination, and application are overdetermined by the institutional and social conditions under which the commentator works. Thus Barthes observes that in literary criticism these discourses are used to interpret two kinds of relations—‘the relation of the critical language to the language of the author studied, and the relation of this language object to the world’—and the interpretative act is further informed by the critic’s ‘historical and subjective existence’.¹⁴

The metalinguistic dimension of translation involves a different kind of complexity and instability. Not only is the translator usually dealing with an entire text, a lengthy and dense chain of signifiers which possess intertextual and intersemiotic connections, but translating moves between signifiers taken from two languages, each of which possesses its own graphematic, phonological, grammatical, and lexical differences. The translator constructs a chain of signifiers in the receiving language to signify not simply the foreign text, but two kinds of *relations* constructed in and by that text: a semiotic relation between the foreign-language signifiers and signifieds and a referential or representational relation between the foreign-language signs and real objects

¹² Derrida (1982a).

¹³ cf. Barthes (1968) 31–2. This term is defined differently by Peirce and Eco. See Eco (1976) 68–72.

¹⁴ Barthes (1972b) 258, 257.

or phenomena. A translator may assign different emphases to these relations depending on the genre of the foreign text and its specific qualities: humanistic texts distinguished by complicated discursive structures (e.g. literature, philosophy, history) demand greater attention to the semiotic relation, whereas pragmatic texts designed to serve an instrumental function (e.g. travel guidebooks, restaurant menus, instruction manuals) demand greater attention to the referential relation.

In trying to signify these relations, the translator must in fact create them anew by replacing the signifying chain constituting the foreign text with a substantially different chain in the translation, effectively dismantling and displacing the foreign linguistic, literary, and cultural context and building another context in a different language, literature, and culture. The meaning of any sign, as Jacques Derrida has noted, can change because a sign 'can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion'; he even uses a translation to illustrate this concept of 'iterability'.¹⁵ Translating effects a more radical break than a relatively simple iteration such as a quotation because it simultaneously decontextualizes and recontextualizes the foreign text in terms that are variously linguistic, literary, and cultural. As a result, translating unavoidably produces shifts and variations that not only inflict a substantial loss of form and meaning upon that text, but entail an exorbitant formal and semantic gain in the translation, the release of effects that may have nothing to do with the foreign language and culture and work only in the receiving situation. The signified of the translation, then, can never exactly match the signified of the foreign text or the relation between the foreign signifiers and signifieds or the relation between the foreign signs and real objects or phenomena. The connection between the two signifying systems is not only determined by their structural differences, but contingent on an interpretation that is culturally, socially, and historically determined—even before further differences emerge in the reception of the translated text as it circulates among different constituencies in the receiving situation.

At this point, the interpretative function of translation can be described more precisely: the translator tries to align the signifieds of the translated text with the semiotic and referential relations that comprise the foreign text through the use of an interpretant. In translating, the interpretant can be *formal*, such as a concept of equivalence, whether that concept entails that the translation be coextensive with the foreign text or restricted to one or more of its textual features. The translator may decide, for example, to render the foreign text by recreating or imitating closely only one discursive structure: its

¹⁵ Derrida (1982*b*) 320.

sound or metre, its point of view or the conceptual density of its terms, its representation of human agency or its pattern of figurative language. Alternatively, the translator may choose to construct a more thoroughgoing semantic correspondence with the foreign text based on current dictionary definitions, or in other words a lexicographical equivalence, while sacrificing more complex discursive structures.

The interpretant can also be *thematic*, a code or meaning formulated by the translator on the basis of research or experience. This code may be derived from reading not only the foreign text, but foreign literary history and criticism, not only other texts in the foreign language, but texts in the receiving language. It may also be derived from the translator's experience with objects or phenomena in both the foreign and receiving cultures. A thematic interpretant can encode setting or characterization, terminology or reference through subtle lexical choices and intertextual connections or through ostensive meanings based on sensory data. In rendering a menu, for instance, a translator may replace a concise term for a foreign food with a more expansive description of cooking techniques and ingredients that exist or have a counterpart in the receiving culture even if they are not usually combined in the same way.

It is in applying interpretants that the translator inscribes an interpretation in so far as the interpretants become the criteria by which the translator chooses linguistic forms, literary traditions and effects, and cultural values to render the foreign text. This interpretative process is constitutive of translating, regardless of the foreign text or text type. Given its inevitability, the translator's application of interpretants may be largely automatic and therefore unconscious or unreflective, shaped by complex psychological and cultural variables. Or it may take a more conscious and sophisticated form, deliberately devised on the basis of materials that the translator has chosen from the receiving language and culture. Since translations are routinely edited by agencies, institutions, and publishers, sometimes without consultation with the translator, the translator's interpretants may be revised or supplemented by editors. Whether an interpretant is applied consciously or unconsciously by the translator alone or by editors during the production process, it is undoubtedly the key factor in the recontextualization of the foreign text, ensuring that the translation will exceed the understanding of that text in the foreign culture and rather reflect the receiving situation.

The interpretation inscribed by a translation differs markedly from the commentary that literary criticism or discourse analysis might offer. Although both translation and commentary constitute metalinguistic practices, commentary enjoys an autonomy from the text that is its object, allowing the commentator to select certain textual features to the exclusion of others and to arrange them in an order that best develops and justifies the interpretative moves, whereas

translation, especially according to contemporary criteria of equivalence, can only be relatively autonomous from the foreign text: while some degree of autonomy is inevitable because the recontextualizing process proliferates meanings and effects that differ from those enabled by the foreign text, a translation must maintain a fairly close relationship that is linear and coextensive, not selective, and that is primarily imitative, even if the imitation may include explicative and interrogative effects. The translator's interpretation is inscribed in specific graphematic, phonological, grammatical, and lexical choices, as well as in such other textual features as punctuation and paragraphing, and this inscription is virtually invisible without a comparison between the foreign and translated texts. For most readers, the translation enacts an interpretation that does not simply stand for the foreign text, but comes to be indistinguishable from it and in fact replaces it.

The metalinguistic dimension of translation is thus a particular case of what J. L. Austin calls a 'performative'. The performative is language use in which 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action' under 'appropriate circumstances', that is, when certain conventions are followed.¹⁶ The interpretation inscribed by a translation is an action in Austin's sense. He observes that the verb 'interpret' is a specific kind of performative, an 'expositive', in which the action is 'the clarifying of reasons, arguments, and communications'.¹⁷ Clearly, he has in mind what I have called commentary. Translation does not so much clarify the meaning of the foreign text as aim to fix a meaning in it by creating formal and semantic possibilities that work in the translating language and culture.

Austin's examples of performatives include the response 'I do' uttered during the marriage ceremony. Yet he observes that they need not take the explicit form of utterances with 'verbs in the first person singular present indicative active' but can be 'reducible, or expandable, or analysable into' such a form, and in the case of a written text the first-person reference can be supplied by a signature.¹⁸ Hence the various verbal choices through which the translator inscribes an interpretation might be expanded into the performative 'I interpret *x* in the foreign text as *y* in the translation,' where the identity of the 'I' is conventionally indicated by the translator's byline on the title page and the text is defined as a translation by conforming to current criteria in the receiving culture, such as a concept of equivalence.

The concept of the performative highlights the peculiar sense in which the translator's interpretation is an act of creation. Translating is doing, since it brings into existence a text that did not previously exist in either the foreign or the receiving language, but that is understood by readers with no access to

¹⁶ Austin (1962) 6, 8.

¹⁷ Ibid. 162.

¹⁸ Ibid. 56, 60–2.

the foreign text as standing for that text. This performative aspect can produce far-reaching consequences that may well surpass the reader's understanding of the translation even as they determine how it is understood. Foremost among these consequences is the accrual of value that to some extent follows upon the interpretation while depending as well on the institutional and social sites in which the translation is read and evaluated.

TRANSLATION AS CANON FORMATION: AXIOLOGY

The concept of a second-order sign system can also show how a translation accrues value in the receiving culture. In addition to a metalanguage, Barthes describes another such system as 'connotation' or 'myth'.¹⁹ Whereas in a metalanguage a signifier takes as its signified another sign, in connotation or myth a sign becomes the signifier of another signified. Thus the word 'gold' can be defined as 'a bright yellow metal', and the sign that results from the conjunction of this signifier and signified can in turn convey such other meanings as 'wealth', 'luxury', or 'ostentation', depending on the context. The interpretant that establishes connotative meanings consists primarily of patterns of use in contexts that may include but extend beyond institutions to encompass cultural situations and social formations at specific historical moments. When connotations involve values, beliefs, and representations that serve the interests of certain social groups rather than others, those connotations become ideological in their functioning or mythical in Barthes's sense.

His examples include a visual sign taken from the magazine *Paris-Match*:

On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.²⁰

The second-order sign system that Barthes has located here obviously serves an ideological function as a rationale for French colonialism. The interpretant,

¹⁹ Barthes (1972a) 114–15; (1968) 90–2.

²⁰ Barthes (1972a) 116.

what enables the ‘presence of the [ideological] signified through the [visual] signifier’, consists of the repeated association of certain values, beliefs, and representations with French colonialism in France before and during the 1950s. The *Paris-Match* cover invites the French reader to apply this interpretant, activating the ideological meanings and perhaps giving them an urgency because of current social and political events: Barthes is writing at the end of the decade when anticolonial movements emerged in such areas as Algeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal. The interpretant simultaneously excludes other possible meanings from the visual signifier, fixes the ideological signified, and naturalizes it, making it seem inevitable. ‘Everything happens’, Barthes observes, ‘as if the picture *naturally* conjured up the concept, as if the signifier gave a foundation to the signified,’ whereas in fact the visual image ‘is determined, it is at once historical and intentional [. . .] tied to the totality of the world: to the general History of France, to its colonial adventures, to its present difficulties.’²¹

Barthes elsewhere remarks that the same kind of second-order signification occurs with literary texts, such as when an entire ‘book can refer to the signified “Literature”’.²² Here the text acquires significance from its reception and circulation in social institutions. This process is simultaneously interpretative and evaluative, and the resulting meaning-and-value may be variously aesthetic or cultural, economic or political. To call a text ‘Literature’ is to admit it to a canon of texts on the basis of an interpretant, a definition of literature that functions as a standard of literary judgement, endowing the text with values that are scholarly (it becomes an object of academic research), pedagogical (it receives adoptions as a school textbook), economic (it is reprinted and marketed by academic and trade presses), and social (it becomes a marker of educational achievement and class position). Thus the second-order signifying system that Barthes calls connotation or myth can be more generally described as *axiological*, the system whereby a chain of signifiers accumulates meaning and value through its circulation. Nonetheless, this operation along with its institutional conditions tends to be occluded, so that although the meanings and values result from cultural and social determinants they are taken to be inherent features of the text.

Translating can now be understood as an intricate imbrication of three orders of signification (see Fig. 1.1). The first order consists of the foreign text, although the very decision to translate it continues a process of interpretation and evaluation that has preceded that decision in both the foreign and receiving cultures. The second or metalinguistic order consists of the translation that inscribes meaning in the foreign text by recontextualizing it. And

²¹ Ibid. 129–30, 119, his italics.

²² Barthes (1968) 91.

the third or axiological order consists of the value that accrues to the inscription, both because the interpretation is likely to include meanings that have already been judged valuable by the potential receptors and because the translation is continually interpreted and evaluated as it circulates. It is the axiological dimension that reveals how translation performs various cultural and social functions, including the establishment and reinforcement of the classic status of foreign texts. The value-laden inscription enables a translation to contribute to the process of canon formation housed in academic and other cultural institutions, to maintain the distinction between elite and popular literatures as it is currently drawn, to serve as a metonymic representation of national literatures and cultures, to work as an ideological practice in cultural political agendas, and to create a market for translated literatures.

Here again the interpretant is a key factor in establishing the relation between the translation and its values. Figure 1.1 appears to indicate that two distinct interpretants are applied separately at two distinct orders of signification, but this is a misleading impression that comes from my reliance on a spatial diagram to analyse the complicated signifying process at work here: what seems to be two is in practice one and the same interpretant, or set of interpretants, which produces its manifold effects simultaneously. To be more exact, the same formal and thematic interpretants operate at both the metalinguistic and axiological levels, although their operation carries a different significance corresponding to their interpretative or evaluative dimensions. A formal interpretant such as a particular concept of equivalence may be viewed in certain periods as especially appropriate for canonical texts and may thus become a mark of canonicity in translating. During the twentieth century, for example, the multiple English versions of Cervantes and Dostoevsky, Proust and Kafka, Svevo and Camus show an increasingly close adherence to the foreign texts, avoiding substantial variation or rewriting precisely because the texts are canonized. The formal interpretant may also involve a particular discursive strategy, a selection of signifiers whose lexical and syntactical features are considered appropriate for rendering canonical texts. During the 1950s, poetical archaisms became a prevalent strategy for English-language versions of canonical poets, as is evident in Richmond Lattimore's *Homer* (1951) and John Ciardi's *Dante* (1954).²³ Hence the sporadic adoption of such poeticisms in Allen Mandelbaum's 1958 version of Giuseppe Ungaretti's poetry can be read as a canonizing gesture, a reformation of the canon of foreign poetries in English so as to admit the more recent poet.

²³ Venuti (2004) 494.

The thematic interpretant can similarly work to canonize the foreign text by inscribing a particular code. This interpretant may include values, beliefs, and representations that enjoy great esteem in the receiving culture, regardless of whether they are relevant to the foreign text. C. K. Scott Moncrieff's *Proust* (1928) and Willa and Edwin Muir's *Kafka* (1930–48) contain lexical choices that reflect the translators' Christian beliefs, consequently revising descriptions and characterizations in the French and German texts while subtly enabling those texts to gain acceptance in English.²⁴ The thematic interpretant may also exert a canonizing force by inscribing a scholarly interpretation that has achieved dominance as an understanding of the foreign author's work. Mark Harman's 1998 translation of Kafka's novel *The Castle* aims to portray the main character K. as 'calculating and self-centered', a reading that academic critics began to articulate in the 1960s and subsequently developed into a historical understanding of how Kafka explored the uncertain place of assimilated Jews in Habsburg Prague.²⁵ Harman's translation can thus maintain the canonicity of Kafka's novel by fashioning the portrait of K. so as to support an authoritative interpretation.

Yet Harman did not deliberately set out to write an academic version. On the contrary, his approach was more translatorly in his decision to render the German text as closely as possible and avoid the interpretative shifts introduced by the Muirs as they assimilated it to English-language cultural values. Harman's practice shows that a formal interpretant such as close adherence to foreign lexical and syntactical features can shape more complex discursive structures such as style, characterization, and genre, signifying a theme that has acquired cultural capital in academic institutions—whether or not the translator is aware of this development. In Harman's case, the formal interpretant ultimately became thematic in its effect on K.'s characterization, and this effect has been recognized by scholars as reflecting trends in Kafka commentary.²⁶

Although the translator's inscription works only in the receiving situation, it can nonetheless incorporate meanings and values that the foreign text has accumulated in the foreign culture. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky's translation of Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (1990) offers an intriguing example in which a formal interpretant inscribes an interpretation that is not only scholarly, but consistent with a Russian understanding of the formal properties of the Russian text. Neither Pevear nor Volokhonsky are literary scholars; their approach, like Harman's, is translatorly, although

²⁴ Damrosch (2003) 199; Harman (1997) 144–6, 150–1.

²⁵ Harman (1997) 151; Damrosch (2003) 196–7.

²⁶ See e.g. Damrosch (2003).

Volokhonsky's native proficiency in Russian was decisive in exposing the inadequacies of previous translations.²⁷ Pevear describes their approach in his introduction: 'previous translators of *The Brothers Karamazov* into English have revised, "corrected," or smoothed over his idiosyncratic prose, removing much of the humor and distinctive voicing of the novel. We have made this new translation in the belief that a truer rendering of Dostoevsky's style would restore missing dimensions to the book.'²⁸

By 'voicing' Pevear means a method of characterization that not only emphasizes dialogue over the narrator's commentary, but evokes a diverse range of competing voices through 'phrases, mannerisms, verbal tics.'²⁹ As a result, the 'truer rendering' that Pevear and Volokhonsky sought involved a close adherence to the style of the Russian text, but simultaneously inscribed the conception of Dostoevsky's writing that was theorized by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin early in the twentieth century. Bakhtin argued that 'a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels.'³⁰ Bakhtin's work on the novel began to be translated into English during the 1980s, when his approach to Dostoevsky's polyphonic narratives assumed authority among English-language scholars. By the time that Pevear and Volokhonsky's version appeared, 'their tough syntactical literalism' was immediately perceived as a Bakhtinian approach—notably in an appreciative review by Caryl Emerson, the very scholar who translated Bakhtin's study, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*.³¹ The new translation could help to maintain Dostoevsky's canonical status in English, not simply because it more closely adhered to the Russian text, but because this formal interpretant enabled it to reflect an authoritative scholarly interpretation.

CANONICAL INTERPRETATIONS AND COMPETING AUDIENCES

The fact that the interpretants applied by a translator are affiliated with the academy does not guarantee that the resulting translation will be more accurate or more representative of the foreign reception of the foreign text or less reflective of the receiving culture. Pevear is careful to remark that his and Volokhonsky's version is no more than 'truer' to the Russian text; Emerson has pointed out that their deviations include 'the decision to

²⁷ Emerson (1991) 316.

²⁸ Dostoevsky (1990) p. xi.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. xv.

³⁰ Bakhtin (1984) 6.

³¹ Emerson (1991) 313; See also May (1994) 53–5.

“neutralize” Russian gender markings on feminine last names’ by omitting them.³² The interpretations advanced by academic specialists, furthermore, always answer to disciplinary developments in particular institutions, to changing research methodologies and critical debates that are more than likely to differ from the understanding of most readers, whether these readers are native contemporaries of the foreign author or have somehow assimilated previous trends in scholarship. The interpretations may also possess a complexity specific to the foreign culture, which cannot be easily inscribed in a translation without forcing the translator to deviate from the foreign text or to rely on a scholarly apparatus. Nor will a translation that inscribes a scholarly reading necessarily be judged acceptable by every specialist in the foreign language and literature. Academic institutions are sites where different constituencies advance different, competing interpretations, some achieving greater cultural authority than others. Hence a translation whose interpretants are drawn from scholarly readings may actually contain lexical shifts that some academic constituencies find questionable, but that nonetheless represent canonical interpretations.

Consider Joanna Richardson’s 1975 translation of selections from Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*. A literary biographer and critic as well as a translator from French, Richardson followed her many twentieth-century predecessors in establishing a close semantic correspondence to Baudelaire’s poems and in casting her versions in various forms of rhymed metrical verse. Yet on the lexical level she occasionally departed from the French texts, revealing her application of formal and thematic interpretants that inscribe certain scholarly readings but exclude others. Here is a typical example, her version of ‘Le Chat’ (The Cat), one of the poems that Baudelaire addressed to the mulatto Jeanne Duval:

Viens, mon beau chat, sur mon cœur amoureux;
 Retiens les griffes de ta patte,
 Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux,
 Mêlés de métal et d’agate.
 Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir
 Ta tête et ton dos élastique,
 Et que ma main s’enivre du plaisir
 De palper ton corps électrique,
 Je vois ma femme en esprit. Son regard,
 Comme le tien, aimable bête,
 Profond et froid, coupe et fend comme un dard,

³² Emerson (1991) 315.

Et, des pieds jusques à la tête,
 Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum
 Nagent autour de son corps brun.
 Come, lovely cat, my heart is amorous;
 Draw in your claws for me,
 And let me gaze into your splendid eyes,
 Flecked with calcedony.
 When, gently, leisurely, my hands caress
 Your head, your tensile back,
 And grow intoxicated with the bliss,
 The aphrodisiac,
 I see my mistress in my mind. Her glance,
 Like yours, endearing beast,
 Cold, searching, cuts and shivers like a lance,
 Aromas sweet invest—
 A subtle air, a perilous perfume—
 Her body cinnamon.³³

The French text depicts the cat as an evocative symbol, not so much of Duval herself as of Baudelaire's extremely sensuous image of her ('en esprit', in his mind), a mixture of eroticism and violence. In the English version, this image is further inflected by three resonant lexical choices—'calcedony', 'aphrodisiac', and 'cinnamon'—all of which significantly revise the corresponding French lines. Richardson replaces the final line (a close version of it might read: 'swimming around her brown body') with 'her body cinnamon'. The change points to Duval's origins in the Caribbean, where the spice was grown, and thus inscribes the theme of exoticism that became a commonplace of Baudelairean commentary during the twentieth century. In his comprehensive 1969 study, *Baudelaire and Nature*, F. W. Leakey discusses how the Duval-inspired poems explore the 'almost therapeutic virtue of the exotic, as a cure for the "sickness" of modern civilization', a theme to which Richardson herself refers in her introduction as 'a Romantic longing for escape: to eternity or to exotic climes'.³⁴ In so far as 'cinnamon' can simultaneously designate a colour, scent, or taste, the word is also a point of synesthesia in the translation, introducing an often cited aspect of Baudelaire's style that appears in his poem 'Correspondances' yet is absent from 'Le Chat'. Richardson's thematic interpretant of exoticism becomes formal in its effect by creating this stylistic feature.

The choice of 'aphrodisiac' replaces another entire line, the eighth, which might be closely translated as 'in touching your electric body'. It thus uses the metaphor of electricity to emphasize the poet's growing excitement. Yet 'aphrodisiac'

³³ Richardson (1975) 78–9.

³⁴ Leakey (1969), 37; Richardson (1975) 18–19.

excludes this meaning to suggest not only that the poet needs a drug to induce sexual desire, but that he is 'intoxicated' with the drug itself. For the reader familiar with Baudelairean commentary, Richardson's choice again encodes the French text with biographical details. Apart from Baudelaire's fascination with drug use, the English word glances at the rumours about his sexuality which circulated during his life, particularly the idea that he was impotent. The photographer Félix Nadar, a close friend who was also sexually involved with Jeanne Duval, subtitled his memoir, 'Le Poète vierge' (the virgin poet) contributing to the speculation about Baudelaire's sexuality that recurs in biographies and criticism into the twentieth century.³⁵ Here too, as with the exoticizing choice of 'cinnamon', Richardson's introduction makes explicit the point that serves as a thematic interpretant in the translation: 'one should raise the question of Baudelaire's sexual needs and abilities. One wonders if venereal disease had its effect on his virility. The poems he wrote for Jeanne Duval are passionately sensual; but they never speak of the act of love, or of the fulfillment of desire.'³⁶

Richardson's use of the phrase 'flecked with calcedony' likewise revises a line of the French text, the fourth, which might be more closely rendered as 'mixed with metal and agate'. Her choice of the unusual word 'calcedony' is perhaps the most inventive of the three lexical shifts since it constructs a suggestive intertext: 'calcedony' is adapted from *c(h)alcedonius*, the Latin neologism with which Jerome translated the Greek name for the stone that in Revelation (21: 19) formed one foundation of the New Jerusalem; the English adaptation was subsequently used in several influential Bible translations, including the Wycliffites' and William Tyndale's as well as the Authorized Version.³⁷ Thus to apply 'calcedony' to the eroticized image of the cat, itself a symbol for the sexually promiscuous Duval, is to insert a blasphemous allusion into the poem. The thematic interpretant applied here derives again from Baudelaire's biography: in 1857, the year that *Les Fleurs du mal* was published, the French government initiated proceedings against him for offending public morality, and several poems containing religious forms and themes, such as 'Les Litanies de Satan', were described as 'a tissue of blasphemies' (Pichois with Ziegler 1989: 224). Richardson's blasphemous allusion more generally assumes that Christianity, however unorthodox in Baudelaire's case, is central to his poetry, a view that diverse critics have formulated since his death.³⁸ In her introduction she argues that '*Les Fleurs*

³⁵ For examples in English, see Starkie (1933) 74–8; Turnell (1953) 54–8; Hemmings (1982) 200–2.

³⁶ Richardson (1975) 11.

³⁷ See *Oxford English Dictionary*.

³⁸ See e.g. Mauriac (1962), 30–7; Starkie (1933) 468–70; Turnell (1953) 228–34; Hemmings (1982) 175; Claude Pichois with Jean Ziegler (1991), 365.

du mal is the work of a Christian poet,' going so far as to assert that in the poem 'Le Voyage' Baudelaire 'is the Christian pilgrim on the last stage of his progress.'³⁹

For the mass readership of the Penguin Poets, the paperback series in which Richardson's translation was published, she undoubtedly reinforced Baudelaire's canonical status in English by inscribing interpretations that had achieved dominance in academic institutions, among both French and English-language scholars. Yet not all of those scholars agreed with her interpretations, and the divergences became apparent in the two mixed reviews that appeared in academic journals. P. S. Hambly's 1979 review in *French Studies* applied a different thematic interpretant, a more secular reading of Baudelaire as the quintessential modern poet, and so he questioned Richardson's stress on Christian themes as 'misleading', complaining that she omitted poems which express 'a less conventional view of death, the modern acceptance of the eternal void', and calling attention to her Christianizing renderings of '*crime* and *vices* as "sin(s)", *Dieu* as "Holy Ghost" and *Je trône dans l'azur* as "I sit enthroned in paradise"⁴⁰. Lois Boe Hyslop's 1976 review in *Modern Language Journal* applied a different formal interpretant, a conception of Baudelaire's style, and so she criticized Richardson for 'disregarding his stylistic device of comparing the concrete with the abstract' and for 'ignoring his dramatic use of the prosaic and the crude expression to puncture an eloquent or even lofty style'.⁴¹ Yet Hyslop's examples implicitly reveal that, once again, Richardson's Christian interpretant created these stylistic deviations by motivating her choice of religious or biblical language: the reviewer notes that "Et le ver rongera ta peau comme un remords [remorse]" becomes "And worms will gnaw your body, penitent", while 'sepulchres' is used for 'fosse commune [common grave]' and 'broken souls' for 'monstres disloqués [dismembered monsters]' (ibid.). Hambly and Hyslop were not simply assuming that Richardson's translation should recreate the themes and style of the French texts with precise accuracy, something that the recontextualizing process makes impossible. Rather, they were insisting that she accept the interpretants they themselves had applied in their own readings of those texts.

The scholarly reviewers did agree in criticizing one of the most distinctive features of Richardson's translation, her recurrent use of poetical archaisms. Her version of 'Le Chat' is typical in this respect: she resorts to lexical items such as 'perilous' to render 'dangereux' ('dangerous'), but also to syntactical inversions such as 'aromas sweet' and 'her body cinnamon'. Although Baudelaire's 'taste for archaisms' had been noticed by at least one other critic,⁴² Hyslop felt that with Richardson 'a felicitous rendering is marred by an

³⁹ Richardson (1975) 19.

⁴⁰ Hambly (1979) 354.

⁴¹ Hyslop (1976) 478.

⁴² Turnell (1953) 266.

excessive use of archaic expressions or inversion which seems incompatible with the conversational tone that Baudelaire often adopts'; Hambly in turn refers to the 'academic flavour' of Richardson's translation as well as her 'penchant for the unusual noun', citing as his examples such archaic words and phrases as 'balm elysian', 'tenement of clay', and 'falchion'.⁴³ The reviews indicate that by the mid-1970s the current standard dialect of English had become the dominant linguistic form for translating canonical foreign poetries, ratified by its acceptance in the academy. Richardson's poetical archaisms, however, reflect the application of a different formal interpretant that signifies the historical distance of Baudelaire's work, its status as a past literary classic. In deviating from the dominant linguistic form, the archaisms also inject a note of unfamiliarity or foreignness into the experience of reading her translations, even for academic specialists.

FLUENCY AND THE CANONICAL TRANSLATION

This foreignizing effect is worth pointing out because translation too can enact the same sort of naturalization that Barthes located in a second-order signifying system like myth. Among the factors that enable readers to comprehend the metalinguistic and axiological dimensions of a translation, not as inscriptions made during its production and circulation but as inherent features of the foreign text, is the translator's application of a particular formal interpretant: fluency, a discursive strategy that produces easy readability by adhering to the current standard dialect of the translating language, the most familiar, most immediately intelligible form, and by favouring linear syntax and univocal meaning, regardless of the stylistic peculiarities that characterize the foreign text.⁴⁴ Fluency, easy readability, familiarity produce an illusion of transparency whereby the translation is read, not as a translation that is transformative and so relatively autonomous from the foreign text, but rather as that text itself, free of any mediation by formal and thematic interpretants. Consequently, the inscription is mystified by an illusory textual effect that supports the performative force of the translation, allowing it to be taken as the foreign text for readers who cannot read it in the foreign language.

Constance Garnett, the most widely read English-language translator of Russian literature, was also among the most naturalizing in her cultivation of a fluent strategy. Her translating cast two illusions simultaneously: she invested her versions with realism and with transparency, made them seem

⁴³ Hyslop (1976) 478; Hambly (1979) 355.

⁴⁴ See Venuti (1995).

true as representations of reality and of the Russian texts. ‘Constance Garnett’, as Rachel May observes, ‘had this gift of convincing her readers that she “must be right”’; far from questioning her translations, they accepted her word *as* Turgenev, *as* Chekhov, *as* Russian prose.⁴⁵ Richardson’s Baudelaire, in contrast, is less naturalizing because her reliance on archaisms at both the lexical and syntactical levels makes it less fluent, but also because the translations are presented in a bilingual format and preceded by an introduction that sets forth her understanding of the French texts, the scholarly basis of her interpretants. Thus the reader is tacitly invited to read her translations *as* translations and to submit them to close examination.

The exact nature of the reader’s interaction with the translated text is of course essential for the success of the naturalization enacted by the illusion of transparency. Different readers bring different cultural tastes and abilities to their reading, leading them to process the text in different ways. Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that ‘elite’ taste rests on the use of specialized knowledge in the detached formal appreciation of a cultural object, drawing the boundary between art and life, whereas popular taste seeks to erase that boundary through a vicarious participation in the object, a sympathetic identification with characters as real people, for instance, which often leads to the inference of moralistic lessons for conduct.⁴⁶ An elite reading experience, then, is more likely to interrogate the illusionism that results from fluent translating and mystifies the interpretative and evaluative inscription, while a popular reading is more likely to accept the illusionistic transparency as the truth of the foreign text, taking the inscription as an inherent feature.

These different experiences are no more than potentialities to be realized and qualified in a particular reader’s interaction with a translation. The Pevear–Volokhonsky version of Dostoevsky presents an illuminating case of how the reader’s taste as a function of cultural and social identity plays a decisive role in the experience of reading a translation of a canonical text. Pevear and Volokhonsky translated against the work of a translator like Garnett, trying to restore the stylistic peculiarities that she excised or minimized in her effort to produce fluency. Hence, for the reader who knows and has long valued Garnett’s translating, the Pevear–Volokhonsky version can seem to possess ‘a mannered, even stilted quality of language’, a foreignizing effect that is judged negatively—even by readers who are translators of Russian literature.⁴⁷

This means that the translation of a canonical text can itself acquire canonicity, becoming a standard by which to evaluate competing retranslations or to pre-empt them. To attain such a status, a translation needs to meet at least two conditions: its application of dominant formal and thematic interpretants must

⁴⁵ May (1994) 143.

⁴⁶ Bourdieu (1984).

⁴⁷ May (1994) 54–5.

be (or eventually become) so transparent as to seem true or adequate to the foreign text, and its literary value must be supported and increased by cultural and social factors such as copyright law and market forces (a publisher can retranslate a canonical text only when it is no longer under copyright, and this decision will be taken only when existing versions are not so critically acclaimed as to undermine the competitiveness of a new one). The canonicity of a translation can be so much beyond question that it is preferred even by academic specialists whose qualifications make them capable of taking an elite approach. They have studied the foreign text and therefore know that no translation can communicate it in some untroubled or unmediated manner. Yet they nonetheless prefer the canonical translation, in effect adopting a popular response because of their previous reading experiences.

Caryl Emerson's description of her own relation to Garnett's work is exemplary here:

Most of us, even American Slavists, read Garnett-Dostoevsky in high school, long before we dreamed of majoring in Russian. At some level her solutions persist and are retrofitted back into the original; her musty, well-crafted sentences seem to cry out their nineteenth-century credentials, even though our later absorption in the Russian text has convinced us that Dostoevsky was portraying his own utterly contemporary, colloquial and feverish age.⁴⁸

For generations of readers, Garnett's translation has become part of their cultural and social identities, producing what Emerson calls 'reader's nostalgia' and overcoming the elite taste that some of those readers develop as academics. Garnett's inscription is mystified in their responses, unconsciously 'retrofitted back into the original', even though her English seems to be 'musty' or dated, not quite current usage. In fact, when translating Bakhtin's study of Dostoevsky's narrative, Emerson did not retranslate the quotations from the novels but used Garnett's versions.

Interestingly, readers who have not read a canonical translation may adopt a popular approach even with a retranslation that can complicate the illusionistic immediacy of their response. Compared to Garnett's translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, the Pevear-Volokhonsky version is less fluent in its effort to recreate Dostoevsky's peculiar style, and less fluency usually entails less transparency, thereby weakening or undermining the popular reader's identification with the text. Yet readers who first experience Dostoevsky's novel in this version have actually encountered no obstacle to their identification.

The point can be documented by extracts from an internet discussion group on 'Classics Corner', a section of the 'Constant Reader' webpage

⁴⁸ Emerson (1991) 315–16.

devoted to the exchange of comments on canonical texts.⁴⁹ During the summer of 2001, a group of fourteen readers discussed the Pevear–Volokhonsky version of *The Brothers Karamazov*, leaving a remarkable record of the popular reception of the novel in this translation. The discussion was wide-ranging, including not only comments on the style, atmosphere, and plot, but also some attention to the pertinence of historical issues such as the social position of women in Dostoevsky's Russia. Nonetheless, most comments took the form of character analysis, with the reader ultimately making the distinctively popular move of blurring the distinction between the novel as a work of art and the reader's own reality. Here is a typical comment from a reader I will call 'Kay':

Grigory is one kind of person I do not enjoy. He thinks he is a good person because he believes in God. Yet, his daily actions are less than admirable. Yes, he took in Dmitri and Smerydakov, but he didn't show much love for them. He has too many conditions for people.

He's one character that believes his own lies. Of course, I suppose we all do in one way or another. This book has me pondering on what lies I've created for myself. I like Dostoevsky's point that even awful people can show basic human needs that render them temporarily pitiable. That sort of behavior has always troubled me. I don't know what to do with mean spirited people that still display emotional aches and pains that deserve comforting. Yet I cannot stand being around them or having anything to do with them.

Whereas an elite response might focus on the formal features of Dostoevsky's novel, considering how he manipulates style to develop character, or on his themes, considering how the ideas he addresses are related to social debates in nineteenth-century Russia, Kay's popular response treats Grigory as a real person, delivering a moral judgement on his behaviour and then applying that judgement to her own experience. This sort of participation in the text did not prevent her from becoming momentarily aware of the translation: when another reader quotes a passage from Garnett's version, Kay responds by quoting the passage from Pevear and Volokhonsky's and then notes that it 'is fuller and flows better'. For her, the retranslation avoids deleting portions of the Russian text and is more fluent, perhaps because this version is closer to current usage than Garnett's. The depth of Kay's engagement with the characters clearly shows that her reading was not in any way inhibited by Pevear and Volokhonsky's recreation of Dostoevsky's polyphonic style.

At this historical juncture, elite readers may in fact be more likely to resist the use of innovative translation strategies with canonical texts. Their cultural and social identities have been formed through experiences with older, fluent translations that have been canonized precisely for mystifying the translators' inscriptions, for seeming true or adequate renderings. To these readers, who

⁴⁹ <<http://www.constantreader.com>>, accessed 15 Nov. 2007.

are not only educated but professional, who include teachers and scholars, reviewers and translators, fluency has come to be equivalent to canonicity, even when the foreign text does not itself implement such a discursive strategy. Popular readers, oriented towards pleasure instead of a specialist application, are not so much open to innovative translating as ready to impose a popular approach, unhampered either by an experience with previous versions or by the less fluent strategies that the retranslator may have developed to improve on those versions. To the popular reader seeking identification, the meanings and values inscribed by those strategies come to seem inherent features of the foreign text, the basis for its canonical status.

It must be recognized, finally, that the very notion of canonicity, whether it is applied to a foreign or translated text, can be defined in various ways according to different cultural discourses, social situations, and historical moments. And this notion can work together with the reader's cultural and social identity to mystify the socially determinate qualities of a translation, displacing them with an ideological function. Barthes refers to this effect of second-order sign systems as 'language-robbery': the chief characteristic of myth, he observes, is 'to transform meaning into form', reducing or excluding the potential meanings of the first system by turning it into the signifier of an ideological signified in the second system; myth 'robs' or 'distorts' the meanings that might be attached to the image of the black soldier saluting the French flag so as 'to naturalize through [that image] the Empire'.⁵⁰ A particular notion of canonicity might similarly alter and amplify the significance of a translation, inscribing meanings and values while naturalizing the inscription and thereby mystifying its historical contingency.

Notions of canonicity always risk essentialism. Whether the value they assign to a body of texts rests on divine inspiration or moral correctness, on the self-knowledge derived from the aesthetic or the socially unifying power of culture, these notions tend to assume the existence of inherent, unchanging textual properties that can too easily be revealed as contingent inscriptions, as interpretative and evaluative acts performed in changing social situations. Translation is one such act, perhaps among the most insidiously mystifying because it operates as a performative, creating meanings and values that often transform the foreign text beneath an illusionistic transparency and reflect interests in the receiving culture.

To read a translation as a translation, making its inscription visible through a comparison with the foreign text, demands a particular kind of elite approach: the reader needs to be not only proficient in the foreign language, but familiar with the foreign literature and its critical traditions, not only

⁵⁰ Barthes (1972).

knowledgeable about the reception of the foreign text in the translating language, but versed in the semiotic concepts that can expose the metalinguistic and axiological dimensions of translation. This approach, if it gains any currency, will be adopted most often in the academic institutions that are so influential in forming the interpretants applied in both reading and translating canonical texts. The study of translation, especially as it contributes to ideas of the classic, can only help to illuminate the values that circulate in the academy and that, in many cases, reach popular readerships.

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The End of Translation

John Sallis

In speaking about translation, it will not be easy to keep things from getting tangled. In particular, it will not be easy to keep the speech itself from getting mixed up with the topic of the speech. It will not be easy to produce a discourse capable of remaining simply distinct, completely apart, from what the discourse is about. In other words, it will not be easy to speak about translation without getting entangled in translation, without getting caught up in translating translation. For even simply to explain what translation is, to interpret the meaning of the word is in a sense—in one of the primary senses of the word—to translate.

The pretence of a discourse that would be uncontaminated by translation cannot, then, be sustained. Forthrightness would dictate acknowledging the entanglement and, from the beginning, openly translating translation.

Yet the theme here is neither simply translation nor even—not so simply—the translating of translation, but rather the end of translation. In this connection the polysemy of *end* operates in several registers simultaneously: thus the word can signify completion/termination, realization/impossibility, appropriation/retreat, to mention only the most manifest values. The end of translation cannot be separated, except as a moment, from the end of metaphysics. The concern will be not only with tracing the figures wherein the end of translation has come about, but also with taking up the question of translation beyond the end of metaphysics. The question will thus become that of translation beyond the end of translation and the task that of marking some indications regarding such transgressive translation.

The end can be understood only from the beginning, only by beginning with the classical concept of translation as it came to be determined in the beginning of philosophy. Yet to understand this classical concept of translation, it is necessary first of all to have in view the specific question to which the classical determination constitutes a response. This question can be brought into view most expediently by translating translation.

To translate something is to convey it across an interval. Such, at least, is the word's most general signification. This signification is itself conveyed—that

is, translated—across a certain historical interval by the word's etymology. Its Latin root *translatus* was used as the past participle of *transfere*, to carry or bear across an interval. This word, *transfere*, was in turn the translation of the Greek μεταφέρω—hence the connection, still intact, between translation and metaphor.

One of the specific things that can be conveyed across an interval is meaning, as when the meaning of one word is carried over to another. If the interval is that between two languages, then such conveyance constitutes translation in the ordinary sense of translating something in one language into the words of another language. If, on the other hand, the interval lies within a single language, then translation consists in a transfer of meaning between synonyms. Jakobson calls this intralingual translation, in distinction from interlingual translation, which conveys meaning from one language to another.¹

Translation is inseparable from measure. In translation from one language to another, a measure must govern the transference that occurs across the interval separating the languages. It is in reference to this measure that a translation can be judged good or bad or even not a translation at all. What is the measure? The translation produced is supposed to be true to the original, true to the text (or speech) from which it is produced and of which it is alleged to be a translation. But what is this truth of translation? What does *truth* mean in this connection? Presumably it consists in the translation's corresponding to the original, in its being like the original. But what sense does correspondence have here? Correspondence in what respect? And how can a word, phrase, or sentence in one language be like a word, phrase, or sentence in another language?

It is to this question of the measure, the truth, of translation that the classical determination of translation responds. This classical determination is prepared in the Platonic dialogue *Critias*, the fragmentary sequel to the *Timaeus*. In the *Critias* the promise made in the *Timaeus* would be made good: now Critias would tell in detail the story he had only briefly outlined in the *Timaeus*, the story of the great and wonderful deeds of the original Athens, the Athens of 9,000 years ago, in its struggle against the expansionist designs of Atlantis. Already in the *Timaeus* Critias relates how the story has come down to him from his grandfather Critias, who was told it by his father Dropides, who, in turn, was told it by his relative and friend Solon. Solon, in his turn, had been told the story when he travelled to a foreign land, specifically, when he visited Saïs in Egypt, a city said, like Athens, to have been founded by Athena, but by Athena under another name, the foreign

¹ Jakobson (1987) 429.

name Neith. Thus, Solon's story of Athens, as it was indeed in the beginning, was brought from a foreign land, from a foreign city whose founding and constitution had so much in common with Athens as to make it a kind of foreign double. It was there, in that foreign city, that the story had been preserved in writing, surviving thus the loss to which living memory is subject, especially when, as in Greece, much of the population has been repeatedly destroyed by natural calamities. But as preserved in this foreign place, the story had itself become foreign—foreign being understood by the Greeks primarily in reference to speech, the foreigner being precisely one who did not speak Greek. In other words, the story had been preserved, not in Greek, but in a foreign speech, in the speech of the foreign place where it was sheltered from destruction. Thus, in bringing the story back to Athens from this foreign place, Solon was faced with the problem of translation.

It is in the *Critias* that Critias describes how Solon dealt with this problem. Critias introduces his account, he says, in order to forestall the astonishment that his auditors might otherwise experience at hearing Greek names given to foreigners. He continues with a sentence that may be translated: 'As Solon was planning to make use of the story (*λόγος*) in his own poetry, he found, on investigating the force of the names (*τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων δύναμιν*) that those Egyptians who had first written them down had translated them into their own voice (*φωνή*).'²

The basis for Solon's translational performance lay in his investigation of the force of names or words. The force (*δύναμις*) of a word consists in its being capable (*δύναμαι*) of accomplishing that which it is proper to a word to accomplish. What is proper to a word as such is that it announce something or someone, that it announce that which it names. In announcing what it names, the name presents it, makes it present in a certain way, in a way that philosophy—from Plato on—distinguishes from the way in which sense-perception (*αἴσθησις*) makes things present. Thus, the force of a name is its capacity to make manifest that which it names. This is why names, especially when they are preserved in writing, are the repository of memory.

It was, then, the investigation of the force of names that revealed to Solon that the Egyptian text was a translation, presumably because the force of those names proved weak, because the names displayed only a limited capacity to make manifest what they named. Again and again—especially in modern times—it will be insisted that a translation is always less forceful than its original.

Yet, even though the force of the Egyptian names must have proved somewhat weak, Solon's investigation of their force sufficed to allow him to recover that which, if only weakly, they served to make manifest. Activating

² Plato, *Crit.* 113a.

the names, putting their force in force, Solon could then carry through the translation into Greek. Thus, Critias' narrative continues: 'So he himself, in turn, retrieved the thought (*διάνοια*) of each name and leading it into our own voice wrote it out.' Here for the first time the structure, the basic constitution, of translation is determined. It is a matter of putting in force the manifestive force of words set in a foreign voice, of doing so in such a way as to retrieve the thought they make manifest, so as then to lead that thought into one's own voice. This inaugural, protoclassical determination of translation subsequently comes to be stabilized in relation to the primary axis of philosophy. The schema that constitutes the classical determination of translation is correspondingly simplified: translation is taken to consist in the movement from a unit in one language (word, phrase, sentence, etc.) to a corresponding unit in the other language, this movement being carried out by way of circulation through the signification, the meaning. Beginning with, for instance, a word in one language, one passes to the meaning in order then, from the meaning, to pass to the corresponding word in the other language. In this determination the sense of correspondence, the truth of translation, is also determined: a translation is true to its original if it has the same meaning. The measure of translation is restitution of meaning.

By the time of Cicero this classical determination of translation is firmly established. In discussing his own translation of Greek orators, Cicero observes that there are two things that must be retained in translation: the same thoughts and, since the texts are oratorical, the same figures of thought. The schema of the classical determination is thus clearly in place: the translation consists primarily in saying in Latin words the same thoughts as were said in the Greek words of the orators.

On those occasions in the history of philosophy, when translation again is taken up as a problem, there is very little deviation from the classical determination. One such occasion occurs in Book 3 of Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. The context is one in which Locke is discussing his thesis that the names of so-called simple ideas are incapable of being defined. He focuses on the futility of attempting to give such definitions, or rather, on the way in which alleged definitions prove to be not definitions at all but only translations. Referring to the atomists' alleged definition of motion as passage from one place to another, Locke declares: 'This is to translate, and not to define, when we change two words of the same signification one for another.'³ One notices that Locke does not restrict translation to transferral between *different* languages: whether one substitutes for *motion* the Latin *motus* or the English *passage*, it remains a matter simply of translation.

³ Locke (1963) ii. 3. 3. 9.

Such is, then, the classical determination of translation and the limit that this determination assigns to translation. Inasmuch as, after Plato, this determination is founded on the distinction between intelligible and sensible, it can also be called the metaphysical determination of translation. As such it holds sway throughout the history of metaphysics.

It is only in the nineteenth century that this determination of translation comes to its end—as, according to Heidegger, metaphysics as such comes to its end in the double sense of completion and of termination. This event, this end of translation, does not, any more than with metaphysics as such, preclude the continuing circulation of this determination in slightly masked forms; neither does it make any less compelling the need, in thinking, to overcome this determination.

The classical or metaphysical determination of translation is centred in the restitution of meaning, in the affirmation of the essential possibility of the restitution of meaning. This possibility may be limited, most notably in the case of poetry; but if it is limited, this is only because the meaning, the intelligible content, remains essentially dependent on its sensible expression, on the words in which it is voiced or written. What happens in the end, in the completion, of the metaphysical determination of translation, is that these limits are renounced and an unlimited reign, as it were, of translatability is proclaimed. Even poetry would thus come to submit to full restitution.

This completion of the metaphysical determination of translation occurs in Hegel's thought. Indeed one can mark the very place within Hegel's system where this final reign of translatability is declared. It occurs in the account of poetry in the *Aesthetics*, in the account of poetry as the highest art, as the art in which all essential dependence on the sensible comes finally to be transcended. In this regard everything depends on what constitutes the proper sensible element of poetry. Whereas one might take spoken or written words to comprise the sensible element (corresponding to the stone, colour, and tone, respectively, of architecture, painting, and music), Hegel insists that the proper element of poetry is inner representation and intuition itself (*das innere Vorstellen und Anschauung selbst*). As the painter uses colour in order to present something, so the poet shapes one's inner representational powers so that one comes to intuit inwardly that which the poet would present. Speech, which might otherwise be taken as the sensible element in poetry, Hegel considers a mere sign from which one withdraws at the very start; speech exhausts itself in its capacity as a mere sign, and the sensible character of speech is not carried over to the poetic work itself; as mere sign, speech does not determine—but only communicates—the poetic work. Thus the work remains unaffected by shifts from one system of signs to another, that is, by translation.

Hegel is explicit about the consequence: he declares that poetry can 'be translated into other languages without essential detriment to its value'. It can even—without detriment, he implies—be 'turned from poetry into prose'.⁴

Coming to completion in the unlimited possibility of translation proclaimed by Hegel, the metaphysical determination of translation comes to its end, not as completion, but as termination, in the impossibility of translation proclaimed by Nietzsche. This impossibility is all the more abysmal by virtue of its pertaining to a level of translation that is anterior to translation between (or within) languages. In his early, unpublished text 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense',⁵ Nietzsche declares that the creators of language do not aim at any pure truth, at things in themselves, but rather merely express the relations of things to men. For such expression these creators, according to Nietzsche, lay hold of the boldest metaphors (*die kühnsten Metaphern*). Here is Nietzsche's account: 'To begin with, a nerve stimulus transferred [*übertragen*] into an image! First metaphor. The image, in turn, copied [*nachgeformt*] in a sound! Second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one.' Thus, both images and words, both what one sees of things and what one says of them, arise by transferral across the interval separating one sphere from another, by a transferral that is a complete overleaping from one to the other. As such, the genesis of perception and of speech consists in translations that utterly pervert what gets translated. In an impossible declaration, declarable only by an operation of spacing that keeps it apart from what it declares, Nietzsche declares: 'We believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors of things, which correspond in no way whatsoever to the original entities.' But such metaphors would seem to transfer virtually nothing, to carry almost nothing from one sphere to the other. They would seem to be translations in which almost nothing—perhaps even, as Nietzsche suggests, nothing at all—gets translated. They would be bad metaphors, it seems, bad translations, so bad as almost not to be metaphors or translations at all. And we humans would seem to have—at least are declared to have—in our possession nothing but these bad translations. In place of things themselves, mistaken indeed for things themselves, at least for their truthful expression, there would be available to us humans only bad translations of these things, translations so bad as not even to be translations of the things themselves, translations that would translate next to nothing, translations that would verge on not being translations at all.

⁴ Hegel (1985) ii. 331.

⁵ Nietzsche (1973) 373.

With Nietzsche, then, the unlimited possibility of translation turns into—is overturned, inverted, into—the unlimited impossibility of translation. In these two moments, the metaphysical determination of translation comes to its end.

The end of metaphysics is thus also the end of translation. In other words, the end of the metaphysical determination of translation belongs as a moment to what Heidegger has thematized as the end of metaphysics as such. And though he does not thematize the metaphysical determination of translation and its end, his rethinking of the sense of translation ventures in effect to twist free of that determination precisely as it comes to its end.

A rethinking of translation comes into play at a very early stage of Heidegger's thought. In his Aristotle essay of 1922, he is already attentive to the way in which the translation of a text is necessarily interwoven with the interpretation of it. In Heidegger's subsequent writings on texts of Greek philosophy, this theme is not only reiterated as such, but also enacted in the unfolding of the text under consideration. For instance, in the 1939 essay on Aristotle's *Physics*, Heidegger declares that the sentence-by-sentence translation given of *Physics* $\beta 1$ is already the interpretation proper, so that all else that is called for in the essay is an explanation of the translation. The essay—that is, the interpretation—is, then, by Heidegger's own testimony nothing but the translation and the appended explanation of the translation.

Heidegger says that every translation is already interpretation. His point is not only that interpretation can be carried out by way of translation (as in the 1939 Aristotle essay), but also that in the very operation of translating, interpretation must come into play. This latter point has been elaborated by Gadamer as a way, from within the classical determination of translation, of moving towards the limit of that determination. In *Truth and Method* Gadamer emphasizes that even if a translation preserves the core meaning of the original, it has to transpose it into a different context. In his words, 'The meaning is to be preserved, but, since it is to be understood in a new language world, it must establish its validity therein in a new way.' Gadamer concludes with precisely the same declaration as Heidegger: 'Thus every translation is already interpretation.'⁶ One could say: the translator not only must intend the meaning and keep that intention in force, so that the meaning is preserved in the translation, but also must interpret the meaning, so as to be able to set it in the context of the other language; he must thus express it in the new language world in such a way as to establish it as a valid meaning within that world. Gadamer says, therefore, that the translation of a text is a text formed anew, *eine Nachbildung*.

In a later text Gadamer puts it still more radically. He says: 'Every translation is like a betrayal.'⁷ This formulation indicates that the introduction of

⁶ Gadamer (1993a) i. 387–8.

⁷ Gadamer (1993b) 279.

interpretation into all translation has the effect of submitting translation to its extreme limitation, at least as long as translation continues to be understood according to the classical determination. Interpretation must come into play in order to establish in a new language world the meaning of the text translated; and yet in adapting it to that new world, the interpretative translation inevitably betrays the meaning of the original. It becomes ever more apparent that full restitution of sense has no sense, and it is in this sense that Gadamer's hermeneutics of translation drives the classical determination on towards the limit at which it unravels completely.

Heidegger attaches special importance to translation within a language. He writes: 'we continually translate also our own language, our native language, into its own words.'⁸ He insists even that 'translation of one's own language into its ownmost word' is more difficult than translating from another language; for it is primarily as such a translating that thinking as such takes place. As Heidegger says, thinking 'is in itself a translating'—that is, thinking comes to pass as the originary translating that seeks, above all, to translate one's own language into its ownmost word. There is no thinking before, outside, or beyond translation. There is, in particular, no pure thought of meaning, which, from outside translation, would be directive for translation, providing its measure. Here one sees just how thoroughly Heidegger undermines the classical determination of translation. As he thus thinks the end of translation, that is, thinks it through to its end, he also rethinks it beyond this end, rethinks it precisely in its belongingness to thinking.

Yet, granted such originary translational thinking, what is the character of translation between languages? What is the task of the modern translator, for instance, who turns back to the texts of Greek antiquity? Heidegger characterizes the task as a kind of self-abandonment: in order genuinely to translate such a text, it is required that, first of all, one be oneself translated back into the domain, in which what the text says was originally said. What translation requires, first of all, as its very condition, is that the translator be translated. Or, more precisely, translation involves a certain interaction or reciprocity between translating and being oneself translated. Replacing, for instance, a Greek word with a German word becomes genuinely translation only if one has oneself already been translated back into the domain in which the Greek word was originally and originally said.

Thus, when the modern translator turns back to the texts of Greek antiquity, for instance to such classic texts as those of Plato and Aristotle, what is required is not merely that the meaning of the classic text be reinterpreted within a new language world. It is not a matter merely of a reinterpretation

⁸ Heidegger (1982) 17–18.

that takes up the meaning of the classic text, so as to adjust and reorient it within the coordinates of another epoch—that is, of a reinterpretation that alters what the classic text says in order that its meaning might become readily understandable, linking up with the system of meanings taken for granted in the later epoch and its language. Rather, what is first of all required is that the classic text be freed of the heavy overlay of concepts and language that were indeed made possible by what such classic texts achieved, but that can only distort these texts—and rob them of their provocative force—if projected back upon them. If, for example, one were to set out to investigate the theory of matter in Plato's texts, not realizing that the word *ύλη* took on the precise philosophical sense of matter only through the work of Aristotle, one would inevitably end up chasing only phantoms in the Platonic texts. One would not then have been oneself translated back into the domain of the classic text, would not have shed the cloak of allegedly obvious words and concepts that prohibits entrance into the domain of these texts.

In this connection, *domain* does not merely designate the everyday surroundings in which the ancient thinker passed his days. The domain is determined, rather, as the holding sway of a certain unconcealment (*das Walten einer Unverborgenheit*), of a certain opening of truth (*ἀλήθεια*). As domain of a thinker, it offers a certain clarity and yet sustains also a questionableness (*Fragwürdigkeit*). On the other hand, the domain thus determined does not stand over against the everyday world; it is simply the extraordinary that lies within the ordinary. It is to this proximity that reference is made in the story about Heraclitus that is handed down by Aristotle and retold more than once by Heidegger. The story tells of some strangers who once came to visit Heraclitus. Upon their arrival, they saw him warming himself at a stove. They were surprised, astounded, especially as he invited them to enter, saying 'For here too the gods are present.'

Translation involves substitution, which, in order to issue in genuine translation, presupposes that one has oneself been translated back, displaced, into the domain in which and from which the original word speaks. Yet the converse also holds: it is pre-eminently the translation—the German word, for instance, that is to replace the Greek word—that serves to translate the translator back into the domain from which the Greek word says what it says. Thus Heidegger writes, 'When we merely substitute the German *Unverborgenheit* for the Greek *ἀλήθεια*, we are not yet translating. This happens only when the translating word *Unverborgenheit* translates us into the domain and manner of experience from out of which the Greeks and in the present case the originary thinker Parmenides say the word *ἀλήθεια*.'⁹ Translation must

⁹ Heidegger (1982) 16.

hover, as it were, between the two poles, between substitution and displacement, between translating and being translated. Through such hovering, translation would bring these two moments into their intimacy (*Innigkeit*).

Because this intimacy can become effective, because translating is intertwined with *Wiederholung*, translation has a bearing on *Überlieferung*, on tradition in the sense of handing-down, on not just what is handed down but the handing-down itself, that by which the ‘content’ of tradition gets handed down from one epoch to another. As such, translation ‘belongs to the innermost movement of history’.¹⁰ Still further, ‘An essential translation corresponds . . . to the way in which a language speaks in the sending of being (*wie im Geschick des Seins eine Sprache spricht*).’ It is because such translations inscribe responsively the saying within the sending of being (as *ἰδέα*, as *ἐνέργεια*, as *actualitas*, etc.) that they belong to the innermost movement of history, constituting nodal points, points of jointure, where tradition (handing down from the sending of being) takes place. It is for this reason that Heidegger insists on the decisiveness of certain historical phases of translation, declaring, for instance, that the Latin translation of the basic words of Greek philosophy (*ὑποκείμενον* as *subiectum*, *οὐσία* as *substantia*, etc.) was of such import that ‘the rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translating’.¹¹

In this connection one cannot but hear—across the abyss opened by the dissolution of the classical determination of translation—an echo of Hegel. For it was Hegel who first grasped the connection between translation and tradition. In a letter to the classicist J. H. Voss, the translator of Homer into German, Hegel explains why such translations constitute ‘the greatest gift that can be made to a people’: ‘For a people remains barbarian and does not view what is excellent within the range of its acquaintance as its own true property so long as it does not come to know it in its own language.’¹² Thus for Hegel translation effects appropriation and the corresponding return to self. For Heidegger, on the other hand, who thinks beyond the classical determination, translation inscribes a being-appropriated that is bound to displacement from oneself. Thus it is that Hegel could take his task to be, as he tells Voss, ‘to try to teach philosophy to speak German’; whereas Heidegger’s involves, as he says, venturing to translate Aristotle back into Greek.

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¹¹ Heidegger (1977) 8. See also Sallis (1990) 190–205.

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Political Translations: Hölderlin's *Das Höchste*

Andrew Benjamin

ἔπεται δ' ἐν ἐκάστῳ μέτρον

Pindar, *Olympian* 13. 47

If there is a politics in Hölderlin it is, perhaps, more instructively found in his poem *Das Höchste* rather than straightforwardly in his poetics. This poem is, of course, a translation of Pindar Fragment 169a.¹ Not only has Hölderlin provided a translation, it is accompanied by his own commentary. The fragment has attracted further philosophical investigation from thinkers as apparently diverse as Heidegger, Schmitt, and Agamben.² The project of this chapter will be to investigate the way translation and commentary—recognizing immediately that there will be an inevitable confluence between them—provides an important type of access to the politics implicit in the poetic fragment as a translation.³ Rather than assume that the political concerns the relationship between law and violence in which the former

¹ The Pindar text to which reference is made is the Loeb Edition Pindar (1997). Reference to *Das Höchste* is to Hölderlin (2004) xi. 229. The English translation to which reference has been made is in Hölderlin (1994) 639. References to Hölderlin's philosophical and theoretical writings will be to Hölderlin (1998). (This edition will be referred to as *TS*. It should be noted that this work also contains the Pindar translations.) It should not be thought that content and meaning of the fragment is determined in advance. For two important discussions both of the status of the fragment and the interpretative divisions it has established, see: Ostwald (1965) and Lloyd-Jones (1972). For a detailed study of Hölderlin's translation of the Fragment, see Schestag (1997). On the question of translation in Hölderlin see Wegener (2000). For an important and influential work on translation that involves a sustained encounter with Hölderlin see Nägele (1997).

² I have discussed the relationship between Agamben and Pindar in Benjamin (2005). For Agamben's most sustained encounter with Pindar see Agamben (1998) 30–8.

³ A word here needs to be added on the status both of translations and the Greek texts. What drives the project is not a commitment to there being an original, perhaps pre-metaphysical formulation of philosophical positions within Greek philosophy. Nor equally is there the suggestion that Presocratic philosophical and literary texts, or their translation by Hölderlin,

regulates and allows for the judgement of the latter, in this instance the concern of the political involves an original difference within law. As a result of taking this as a point of departure violence will have to be explained in terms of the differences that mark the founding presence of *nomos* (law).⁴ The differences are threefold. In the first instance, there is a conception of *nomos* as a transcendental ground of sociality, and in the second, the equation of law and statute. Finally, there are a series of relations in which ‘*nomos*’ as a transcendental ground is refused in the name of externality; e.g. ‘nature’ as the external ground of law. External in this context, however, does not mean transcendental. On the contrary, it means external to the social, i.e. external to the polis, as such.⁵ This is the distinction that is played out in relation to the term ‘*nomos*’ as it occurs in Presocratic Greek philosophy (specifically Heraclitus).⁶ Moreover, these differences figure significantly in the philosophical, literary, and historical texts that come after. Specifically, however, the differing permutations to which these distinctions give rise are

are inherently modern and thus unproblematically assimilable to the project of modernity. The project is both more complex and more nuanced. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1986) 83, in his discussion of the relationship between modernity and the Greeks, gets the closest to the truth. In a discussion of Hölderlin’s translation he notes that the ‘work of translation . . . consists of making the Greek text say that which it does not cease saying but without ever saying it’. What is at stake in this project is that doubled saying. On the other hand for a discussion—centred on the discussion of kingship—that argues directly for the modernity of Hölderlin see Fédier (1992).

⁴ The Greek word *νόμος* carries a range of meaning. On one level ‘*nomos*’ is law while *νόμοι* in the plural refers to conventions or statutes. The argument developed through this chapter is that while these meanings endure as fundamental, there is another sense of ‘*nomos*’. In this regard ‘*nomos*’ is the transcendental condition of human sociality. The theme of the chapter involves working out the differing ways this distinction figures within Pindar’s usage, in particular in the use made by Hölderlin’s translation of a Classical text. The term has been transliterated except in those instances in which context demands otherwise.

⁵ The term ‘polis’ is taken to mean the place in which it becomes possible to locate the transcendental condition that is linked to the term ‘*nomos*’. A defence of the polis therefore is a defence of this precise sense of place. Again, the term ‘polis’ has been left in its transliterated form.

⁶ This position is advanced, for example, by Heraclitus in Fragment 114. As this is a difficult and demanding fragment, in the context of this chapter what needs to be noted is the way ‘commonality’, the ‘city’, and ‘law’ are interarticulated. ‘Speaking with understanding (*νόφ λέγοντας*) they must hold to what is shared by all *πῶ ξυνὸ πάντων* as a city (*πόλις*) holds to its law (*νόμος*).’ The analogy in this context is between, on the one hand, nous (understanding), speaking and the shared, and on the other, ‘the city’ (*πόλις*), law (*νόμος*), and acting. The use of *nomos* here has to be distinguished radically from an identification with either private belief or even a generalized and thus abstracted form of private belief. *nomos*—not as statute but as the transcendental condition of human sociality—is intrinsic to the polis. Not only therefore does it define it, it defines it in terms of that which is shared and thus in terms of an inherently regulative principle. It is not inherent as though it were the subject of agreement. On the contrary, it inheres to the extent that it is a transcendental condition. I have pursued this argument in greater detail in Benjamin (2007).

evident in the use made of Fragment 169a by both Plato and Herodotus. They set the scene for what figures, and what does not, in the translation by Hölderlin. In regard to absence, it can always be argued that it is a form of figuring.

This difference between law as a transcendental condition and law as a statute is not as straightforward as it first appears. The relation, be it disjunctive or conjunctive, between these two senses of *nomos* allows for different configurations. Those differences become all the more marked once Hölderlin's commentary begins to play a fundamental role in the interpretation of the actual translation of the Pindar fragment. On one level, the commentary can be understood as a further translation. It can be argued that what are translated are the poem's concerns. Moreover, it is the commentary's necessity that underscores the presence of *Das Höchste* as, in fact, a translation.⁷

Even though politics and translation are, from the start, interconnected, one of the most exacting problems still concerns the way into the poem. The fragment, as has been mentioned, is deployed by both Plato and Herodotus. In regards to the poem itself, Hölderlin only translates what can now be taken as the first four lines. While it will be essential to work through both the poem and Hölderlin's commentary, what has to be noted is that the commentary ends with a definition of 'king', an act the significance of which is twofold. In the first instance it is ground in the fact that the fragment is often referred to as *Nóμος βασιλεύς*. In the second instance, the significance is located in the continual referral to 'kings' and 'princes' at important moments throughout his writings. (A clear example, one which will be taken up at a later stage, can be found in another Pindar translation, *Von der Ruhe*.) In the Commentary to *Das Höchste* reference to the 'King' rather than pertaining to the 'the highest power' (*die höchste Macht*) has a different orientation. It is, for Hölderlin, 'the superlative that is only the sign (*das Zeichen*) for the supreme ground of cognition (*den höchsten Erkenntnißgrund*)'. The identification of King with a 'ground' harbours, it will be argued, that turn to transcendental conditions that is, potentially, already at work within 'nomos'. Thus 'supreme ground', hence the King, can be provisionally interpreted in terms of a transcendental

⁷ In this regard there is a distinction between the translations of complete Odes and the translation of the Pindar Fragments. In regard to the former Charlie Louth (2000: 1050) is clearly correct to argue that, 'the translation is like a graph plotting out the relationship between Greek and German, and though the language is of course German, it retains a Greek syntax, a Greek habitus, as word for word, with very little deviation, it transcribes, transliterates almost the original'. A similar argument concerning the relationship—a relation posed on the level of language—between German and Greek, is also advanced in Hamilton (2003) 292–6. The significant point is that the addition of the Commentary in regards to the Fragments opens up a related though nonetheless importantly different set of concerns. If, for example, 'transcription' and 'translation' are evident then why the commentary?

possibility (as the continual ground for actuality). In order to return to the distinction between power and possibility the role of the poem in Plato and Herodotus will provide the way in.

In the case of Plato the dialogue in question is the *Gorgias*. The poetic fragment is cited by Callicles, at 484b1–c3, as part of an argument, one that will be countered effectively by Socrates, concerning the power of the strong over the weak.⁸ In this context he refers to the strength of an individual who overcomes specific laws or conventions (*νόμοι*) because they are ‘all against nature’ (*τούς παρά φύσιν*). Noting here, of course, that this ‘nature’ is already located beyond the hold of ‘nomos’ and, moreover, its being thus positioned is the basis for refusing the particularity of a given set of *nomoi*. In this move what arises, and does so with the mastery that stems from revolt at its most emphatic, is a state of affairs positioned, for Callicles, within a conception of justice that is determined by ‘nature’, i.e. the justice that accords with nature. Both elements of that accord need to be understood in their radical separation from any original connection between *nomos* and the social. After making this point Callicles adds that in his opinion evidence for this conclusion is found in Pindar. Callicles then quotes the lines most of which Hölderlin translates. In this instance what matters is not the viability of the argument advanced by Callicles against Socrates. On the contrary, what is significant is the way that *nomos* is deployed both within the formulation of his position and in the way that Pindar’s fragment is taken to reinforce that position. After citing lines 3–5 of the fragment concerning the ‘deeds of Hercules’, lines not included in Hölderlin’s translation, Callicles comments that the strong taking the possessions of the weak, or the superior taking those of the inferior, are not aberrant states of affairs. The contrary is the case. Such actions, for Callicles, are both the expression and the presence, thus the enactment, of ‘natural justice’ (*τοῦ δικαίου φύσει*). This is the justice that is positioned on the side of ‘nature’ where nature, as has been argued, is understood as necessarily distinct from the domain of ‘nomos’. (An occurrence which only holds to the extent that ‘nomos’ is equated with convention.) This is an important argument. The position is that the only division emerging from Callicles’ use of Pindar is between ‘nomos’ and thus polity on the one hand, and nature, on the other. Within the overall argument in which Pindar’s fragment is deployed by Callicles there is no discernible division within ‘nomos’ between ‘nomoi’ understood as specific norms or statutes that pertain at a given point in time, and *nomos* as a transcendental condition within and for human sociality. For Hölderlin, as will be argued, it is exactly

⁸ For a sustained engagement with this speech see: Demos (1994). In addition Dodds’ (1979: 270–2) commentary on *Gorgias* should be consulted.

this division that defines the significance of Pindar's fragment when it comes to be named *Das Höchste*.

The specific use Callicles makes of Pindar accounts for why the link in his argument between law and justice involves an equation between *nomos* and prevailing norms: precisely because the equation pertains to norms as opposed to normativity. (Normativity in this context needs to be understood as a transcendental condition that is always originally without content and through enacting or grounding comes to acquire it. This will then allow for a trivialization of specific norms.) This trivialization occurs because the equation means that norms that are not located in 'nature' are arbitrary and therefore lack force. Once again, nature is understood in its absolute differentiation from the place of norms and normativity, i.e. the 'polis'. What this equation exposes is a form of vulnerability. In other words, if it can be argued that *nomos* does not have its ground in nature but in the transcendental condition for sociality—this being the mark of the fold within *nomos*—then the setting in which this relation is acted out, a setting which equates to the polis, has become vulnerable. Emphatic revolt—that conception, which in the language of the Antigone is structured by the *απολις* and therefore is not pitted against identifiable *nomoi*, but their condition of possibility—will be occasioned by that vulnerability.⁹ For Callicles this vulnerability and the exposure it reveals leads to an overcoming that takes place in the name of a different sense of 'nomos', a sense in which it is identified with a form of sovereignty whose ground is 'nature'. In that specific context sovereignty is not just the capacity to exercise political power and any subsequent enactment of that capacity. More fundamentally, sovereignty becomes the politics in which nature acts against the polis where the latter is understood as a transcendental condition. Within this context, and only with it, 'justice' also has its ground in 'nature'. Nature, of course, is that which is given in opposition to a conception of 'justice' that is interarticulated with *nomos* (where the latter is understood as 'convention' as detailed within the argumentative strategy of the *Gorgias*). Here, as has already been intimated, it is not a question of whether or not Callicles is correct in his use of Pindar. What counts is the formulation that is given to the relationship between *νόμος* and *δικη*. In the case of the *Gorgias* this cannot be separated from a concern with 'nature' (*φύσις*). Indeed the division between types of justice, and equally two senses of sovereignty (and by extension the sovereign) occurs due to a posited division between, first, that which pertains to human organization as a necessity, even though once enacted is arbitrary and relative (the last two determinations pertain to content), and secondly, that which endures independently of differing and possibly incompatible modes of human organization, namely nature.

⁹ In this regard see Benjamin (2004).

Pindar is taken as holding to a conception of *nomos* and the right of the strongest both of which have their ground in that which is beyond human organization. Whether this mode of organization pertains to an Orphic conception of the divine or whether it is rooted in a natural order as opposed to a human order is not at this stage central. What is significant is the positioning of *nomos* beyond the locus of human negotiation. What matters therefore is how this beyond is to be understood. It should be re-emphasized that Hölderlin does not translate the line of the fragment that deploys the example of Heracles. The opposite is the case with both Callicles and Pindar. This refusal to let a politics of translation be drawn into questions of exemplarity is fundamental to the formulation of Hölderlin's own translation. As was suggested, what is not translated is of genuine significance. However, at this stage, what is of concern is the definition of 'nomos' as situated beyond the place of human interaction. The reason for allowing this question to emerge will become clear from a comparison with the role played by elements of the same fragment in Herodotus.

Herodotus does not cite the lines of the fragment that pertain to violence and power. He quotes only the first line. The fragment is deployed in order to substantiate contingency. Beliefs and customs vary. Their presence within one social organization is necessary though the content concerning a particular custom may be incompatible with the content of another custom concerning the 'same' theme. The latter is the contingent element.¹⁰ While the reference is intended to address and underscore this contingency, the effect of the words *νόμον πάντων βασιλέα* ('nomos' is king of all) opens up a different question. In other words, and contrary to the spirit of Herodotus' clear intention, the employment of the term 'nomos' brings more into play than the mere presence of norms. What any use of the term demands is a consideration of the following questions. If custom is internal to social organization how is the sense of what is internal to be understood? Is there a link between a positioning of *nomos* as a necessity that is beyond human negotiation and its presence as an internal organizational principle where the principle is necessary even though the specific nature of its content is not? It is essential to be clear here. While the use made of Pindar allows for the presentation of an argument in which the presence of certain lines becomes the evidence for a form of relativism, it remains the case that the very instability within *nomoi*—an instability made clear, for example, by the presence of contradictory

¹⁰ For an important discussion on the contemporary nature of the equation, in Herodotus, of *nomos* and conventions or customs and thus activities that admit of versions of relativity, see Redfield (2002) and Vignoli Munson (2005). For a more general estimation of the issues surrounding the question of the evaluation of persons rather than 'nomoi' in Herodotus, see Gammie (1986) and Flory (1978).

contents—can always be taken as argument for the necessity of *nomos* (where the latter is understood as a transcendental condition). Hence the emergence (and inescapability) of the questions posed above. Relativity, in this context, merely attests to content. At no point is the actual presence of *nomoi* challenged. Presence as opposed to content. *Nomos* remains a necessity. Even within an apparent relativity therefore what endures as ineliminable is the transcendental condition for sociality itself. These issues, ones to which it will be essential to return, open up the concerns of Hölderlin's translation.

What is being translated is clearly not just a fragment of poem. On the contrary, the difficulty of attributing a final determination to the term 'nomos' refers to the fact that it is one whose meaning lacks final determination from the start. While any translation is already a determination in so far as one word comes to take the place of another, the words themselves are the sites of what can be described as the originally indeterminate.

With Hölderlin's translation, as has been indicated, there is both the poem and the commentary. It is as though the presence of the latter is already an acknowledgement of a sense of the indeterminate. The Greek text reads:

*Νόμος ὁ πάντων βασιλεύς
θνατῶν τε καὶ ἀθανάτων
ἄγει δικαίων τὸ βιαιότατον
ὑπερτάτῃ χειρί.*

Hölderlin's translation plus commentary presents the poem in the following way:

Das Gesez,
Von allen der König. Sterblichen und
Unsterblichen; das führt eben
Darum gewaltig
Das gerechteste Recht mit allerhöchster Hand

Das Unmittelbare, streng genommen, ist für die Sterblichen unmöglich, wie für die Unsterblichen: der Gott muß verschiedene Weltern unterscheiden, seiner Natur gemäß, weil himmlische Güte, ihret selber wegen, heilig seyn muß, unvermischet. Der Mensch, als Erkennendes, muß auch verschiedene Welten unterscheiden, weil Erkentiniß nur durch Entgegensezung möglich ist. Deswegen ist das Unmittelbare, streng genommen, für die Sterblichen unmöglich, wir für die Unsterblichen.

Die strenge Mittelbarkeit is aber das Gesez.

Deswegen aber führt es gewaltig das gerechteste Recht mit allerhöchste Hand.

Die Zucht, so fern die Gestalt ist, worinn der Mensch sich und der Gott begegnet, der Kirche und des Staats Gesez und anerbte Sazungen, (die Heiligkeit des Gottes, und für den Menschen die Möglichkeit einer Erkentiniß, einer Erklärung) diese führen gewaltig das gerechteste Recht mit allerhöchster Hand, sie halten strenger, als die

Kunst, die lebendigen Verhältnisse fest, in denen, mit der Zeit, ein Volk sich begegnet hat und begegnet. ‘König’ bedeutet hier den Superlativ, der nur das Zeichen ist für den höchsten Erkenntnißgrund, nicht für die höchste Macht.¹¹

Hamburger’s translation of this particular German translation of the Greek is the site of further decisions; in other words, the locus of further acts of determination. (His translation of the Commentary has also been added.)

(The law,
King of all, both mortals and
Immortals, which for that very reason
Compellingly guides
The justest justice with a sovereign hand.)¹²

The immediate, strictly speaking, is impossible for mortals, as for immortals; the god has to differentiate several worlds, according to his nature because heavenly goodness, for its own sake, must be holy, unalloyed. Human beings, as cognizant ones, must also differentiate between several worlds, because cognition is only possible by contrast. That is why the immediate, strictly speaking, is impossible for mortals and immortals. But the strictly mediate is the law.

And that is why, compellingly, it guides the justest justice with a sovereign hand. Discipline, in so far as it is form in which human beings and the gods meet, the laws of Church and State and inherited statutes (the god’s sanctity, and for human beings the possibility of recognition, an elucidation), these compellingly guide the justest justice with a sobering hand, more strictly than arts they stabilize those vital conditions in which, in time, a people has encountered itself and encounters itself. ‘King’ here means the superlative that is only the sign for the supreme ground for cognition, not for the highest power.

Rather than a straightforward concern with the accuracy of Hölderlin’s translation what becomes significant is the way that this translation is then put to work in the commentary and thus the way the commentary must be

¹¹ There is no intent here to offer a detailed discussion of the translation let alone on the commentary. There are two reasons why this is the case. In the first instance undertaking the latter would necessitate taking up in detail Heidegger’s engagement with both as well as the points of interconnection between Hölderlin and Fichte. In addition Maurice Blanchot’s own engagement with the interplay of Heidegger and Hölderlin in relation to this particular work would itself demand attention. In regard to the latter see the important paper by Robert Savage (2006), esp. pp. 151–5. The second is more Hölderlinian in orientation. In a letter to Friedrich Wilms, Hölderlin (28 Sept. 1803 (1998) 92–3) allows the translator to reposition the original. Working through the interplay of distance and presence, part of the process of repositioning is an attempt to wrest the work from a contextual embeddedness. The question of what it would be like to approach the text in another way is part of what prompts this project.

¹² Hamburger’s translation of ‘gewaltig’ as ‘compellingly’ needs to be noted. The German word allows for a range of possibilities, moving from a sense of compulsion or force to one of violence. The interpretative question of the relationship between ‘Gesetz’ and ‘Gewalt’ endures nonetheless.

worked back through the translation.¹³ Prior to pursuing the commentary there is one aspect of the translation that needs to be noted from the start and that is the apparent complication of the presence of violence. Not only is there the textual problem of registration of ‘violence’ within the fragment and then in its citation by Plato, it is also the case that the relationship between *nomos* and violence, even in Pindar, is not straightforward. Once violence no longer figures directly or unequivocally, then the question of law and its relation to a form of direction, if not directing, a complex introduced by the connection between ‘das Gesez’ as law and the verb ‘führen’ (guides), also takes on a different quality.

The acceptance of violence in the use made of the fragment by Callicles is significant. As has been suggested, within that argument, violence is bound up with a distinct version of ‘*nomos*’. And yet, the fragment still harbours the possibility, contrary to the intention of Callicles, that it is law that brings order (in the form of justice) to violence. Thereby opening up the real question that pertains to violence. Namely, is there a violence that is not bound to any sense of law and which, in virtue of being not bound, comes to found law? This would be sovereign or divine violence. There is in the work of Agamben, for example, an interpretation of the fragment that allows for such a suggestion.¹⁴ Significantly, however, there is another possible interpretation of the ‘same’ fragment which, while allowing for a distinction between the two distinct senses of ‘*nomos*’—*nomos* as a transcendental condition and *nomos* as either statute or norm/convention, nonetheless does not make violence an exception that would then become the basis of law (*nomos*) itself. The philosophical challenge here is to maintain a real distinction between these two different formulations of the relationship between *nomos* and violence. The distinction is clear. In the first instance *nomos* is a transcendental condition. As such, while internal to the polis it grounds activity. The defence of the polis, once posed in these terms, becomes a defence of the transcendental condition for sociality rather than a defence of pragmatic *nomoi*. In the second instance the contrary position is that there are conventions (*nomoi*) justifying violence because the

¹³ Freidrich Schleiermacher’s (1856: 65) translation of these lines is: ‘Das Gesez,| der Sterblichen König und Unsterblichen,|...|...| führt von Natur herbei rechtfertihend| das gewalt-samste mit übermachtiger Hand.’ What needs to be underlined here is the interpolation, by Schleiermacher, of ‘Natur’ into the poem, an interpolation which links ‘*nomos*’ and ‘*physis*’ even though that is not, of necessity, Pindar’s concern. Again, it should be noted that this intrusion is importantly absent from Hölderlin’s translation.

¹⁴ Agamben (1998: 31) argues that what ‘is decisive is that the poet—as the reference to Hercules’ theft clarifies beyond the shadow of a doubt—defines the sovereignty of the *nomos* by means of a justification of violence’. Leaving aside whether this is accurate in so far as the reference to Hercules is concerned, and noting that situating the fragment as much in Plato as in Herodotus will have already complicated the issue, it can still be argued that Hölderlin’s translation is pitted against this precise possibility.

ground of the *nomoi* and thus the enacted violence is always external to any sense of sociality. This is the position that finds voice in Callicles reference to what he describes as ‘natural justice’. Integral to the argument to be advanced here is that the project of Hölderlin’s translation is to avoid the positing of a founding violence beyond either sense of ‘*nomos*’. Moreover, it can be argued that Hölderlin is after a conception of law that is always mediated. In other words, a conception defined by a sense of interiority and as such one that is not positioned as external to what there is. To the extent that such a position can be maintained, the immediate will become the name both for that externality and its impossibility. It may be therefore that the mediate is another name for the transcendental.

The commentary, as has been noted, begins within an evocation of the ‘Immediate’ and its impossibility.

The immediate (*das Unmittelbare*) strictly speaking is impossible for mortals, as for immortals, the god has to differentiate several worlds, according to his nature, for heavenly goodness must for its own sake, be wholly unalloyed. Human beings as cognizant ones must also differentiate between several worlds, because cognition is possible only by contrast. That is why the immediate, strictly speaking, is impossible for mortals, as for immortals.

What is the ‘immediate’ and why is it impossible? The poem as translated by Hölderlin suggests that ‘law’ (*das Gesez*) is sovereign over ‘all’ (the ‘all’ comprises mortals and immortals). In virtue of that ‘sovereignty’ it guides, with force, the most exacting conception of ‘justice’ (*Recht*) and it guides it with the ‘highest hand’.¹⁵ The formulation ‘*allerhöchster Hand*’, repeats the conception of kingship or sovereignty that has already been brought into consideration by the description of ‘law’ (*νόμος* translated as ‘*das Gesez*’) as the ‘king’. Moreover, the title given to the fragment turns part of the adjective—*allerhöchster*—into a substantive, *das Höchste*. Hence ‘*allerhöchster*’ becomes the poem *Das Höchste*. The commentary links the impossibility of the ‘immediate’ to both ‘mortals’ and ‘immortals’. The reason why immediacy is impossible for immortals is that ‘god’ must be able to differentiate between worlds. This pertains to the nature of ‘heavenly goodness’ (*himmlische Güte*). Differentiation demands mediation. For ‘mortals’ the result is similar. At stake here is not just the immediate. Rather, what comes to be identified as impossible is a conception of the Absolute understood as always other than the mediate. The disjunction between immediacy and

¹⁵ The reference to ‘*Recht*’ opens up a number of different paths. One would be to work this conception of ‘Justice’ through Hölderlin’s translation of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. This is a project pursued, *inter alia*, by Schestag (1997). In regards to this chapter, the term will be tied more closely to ‘*nomos*’ and the conception of ‘kingship’ developed in the translation and elsewhere in the writings.

mediation is the retention of that conception. To the extent that the mediate intervenes and mediation endures as a founding condition, then it is the Absolute, as the ‘immediate’, that becomes impossible. It is precisely this philosophical project in relation to a certain conception of the political—the political in Hölderlin’s translation rather than the politics of Pindar—that is unfolding in the Commentary.¹⁶

This reflection on sovereignty continues to be reconfigured within Hölderlin’s writings. Of the many productive occurrences one of the most significant can be found in the letter written to von Sinclair on December 24 1798.¹⁷ The force of the letter resides, at least initially, in the way it plots the impossibility of ‘the absolute monarchy’ (*die absolute Monarchie*). Such a conception of the ‘monarch’ is given within its (the monarch’s) own self-overcoming. The ‘way’ will need to be traced. ‘It is also a good thing and even the first condition of all life (*Lebens*) and all organization that there is no monarchical force (*Kraft*) in heaven or on earth. Absolute monarchy supersedes itself everywhere (*die absolute Monarchie hebt sich überall selbst auf*) since it is objectless, in the strictest sense, it has never been.’ One sense that can be given to the ‘objectless’ nature of ‘absolute monarchy’, which, given the direction of the letter would need to be understood as an ‘earthly’ conception of the ‘immediate’, would be the absence, indeed impossibility, of an original sense of measure. The difficulty, however, with the evocation of measure is that everything then becomes calculable as though the measure, in its opposition to the Absolute, would seem to engender pure determination and thus freedom’s absence. This latter point, the distancing of freedom and its having been replaced by repetition (repetition as the having already been determined), would then become the predicament of a certain conception of making: a making that would include poeticizing. More exactly, it would become the predicament of poetry precisely because it is understood as an activity and thus a version of making. Making, as was intimated, holds open the possibility of a mechanical form of repetition. In contrast to the mechanical there is a relationship between what Hölderlin refers to as a ‘lawlike calculation’ (*gesetzliche Kalkül*)

¹⁶ The relationship between Hölderlin’s project and a thinking of the Absolute is complex and involves a careful nuancing of the argument. For example, in her study of Hölderlin, Françoise Dastur (1997: 16–17) argues, in relation to a discussion of the way he understands ‘le national’, ‘Le national n’est donc pas ce qui en l’homme le sépare de l’universel, mais plutôt ce qui lui permet d’en faire l’expérience vivante, puisque, dans cette perspective que Hölderlin partage avec tout l’idéalisme allemand, l’infini n’est pas séparé du fini. Il n’est en effet différent de fini, ni identique à lui, mais “en” lui, comme son contenu, son être véritable et son effectivité. Il n’y donc pas non plus de finii qui ne soit que fini: toute finité est une figure et une présentation de l’infini.’ The force of this position does not reside necessarily in the way that it presents a conception of the national. The significant element is the way in which the relationship between finitude and the infinite is formulated.

¹⁷ Hölderlin (2004) vi. 186.

and the creation of a life, (perhaps ‘der lebendige Sinn’). This is of course the famous formulation of the ‘Remarks on “Oedipus”’.¹⁸ In a passage which, despite its complexity and apparent distance, needs to be understood as bearing directly on this project, Hölderlin adds after noting the centrality of the ‘lawful calculation’, that ‘then one has to see in what way the content (*Innhalt*) differentiates itself from it, through what type of procedure (*Verfahrensart*) and how in the infinite but constantly determined relation (*bestimmten Zusammenhange*) the specific content is related to the general calculation.’¹⁹ The ‘Remarks’ continue with the recognition that the issue confronting poetry is the continual relation between calculation and that which falls outside its hold. What appears does so in accord with law and rule; however, appearance (both as a content and as working appearing, i.e. appearing as a productive site eliciting the response of criticism) cannot be determined in relation to the quality (the ‘look’) appearing will always have. The constantly determined has a ubiquity. However, to think that there was only ever the ‘constantly determined’ or that it only ever existed in terms of a mode of appearing defined by determination as both *archē* and *telos*, that would then entail that the ‘constantly determined’ were no more than pragmatic (hence singular) entities thought within a pervasive empiricism. If it is possible to go beyond such a state of affairs, then it need not be via recourse to a form of Platonic idealism but to the enacted difference between a conception of law that allowed both the infinite and the constantly determined.

What is important about the refusal of Platonism has to do with the way a Platonic ‘idea’ produces. Production, as caused by the ‘idea’ (*εἶδος*), locates the source of the quality of the appearance as external to the appearance. (Externality pertains as a matter of necessity.) Moreover, while the ‘idea’ appears through the process of participation, it remains the case that the mode of questioning that is most properly Socratic concerns the recovery of the *ousia* of the ‘idea’ (or ‘form’) in question, where the ‘idea’ is conceived in its absolute differentiation from any type of instantiation.²⁰ Hence, and allowing for a confluence of concerns, the Platonic idea would have become the ‘absolute monarch’. Within Platonic idealism the relationship between idea and appearance is ontologically disjunctive. To claim of the monarch that it is ‘objectless’ is to resist that philosophical project in which it becomes possible to pose the question of the Absolute as though the object of that

¹⁸ *Anmerkungen zum Oedipus* in Hölderlin (1998) 94–101.

¹⁹ Hölderlin (1998) 94.

²⁰ Hence the questioning in the *Euthyphro* is explicitly concerned with forcing Euthyphro to understand that the question—what is piety?—cannot be answered by providing instances of piety. Moreover the ontological status of the ‘idea’ is given at 5d2–3. It is described as that which is always the same as itself. Hence the description of piety as *τὸ ὄσιον αὐτῷ*.

question was radically distinct. Rather, the Absolute is always at work within appearance as a continuity; therefore within a reconfiguration of appearance is not a static given but a dynamic process and hence as ‘the appearing’. (As a consequence, the static becomes a moment individuated within that continuity.) Appearing involves therefore a greater degree of complexity than the possible though in the end putative project of pure givenness.

This mode of argumentation has two interrelated components. One is that it comprises, in essence, the force of the conception of tragedy outlined in texts such as ‘The Significance of Tragedies’ and in the two sets of ‘Remarks’ to the Sophoclean translations. The assumption fuelling that conception is that ‘nature’ in Hölderlin’s sense can only ever appear in a form other than itself; a weaker form. As he writes, ‘Properly speaking the original can only ever appear in its weakened form.’²¹ Nature therefore—in the abstract, pure externality as pure immediacy—depends upon art to appear. Art is the ‘weak’ form. Nature’s appearance is always mediated in advance. The mediate is a sign, an instance of which is the hero of the tragic drama. The other component does not resist the register of tragedy, nonetheless it would not take as central the tragic as a named topos. Rather what would be taken as central is that conception of the external that must always overcome its externality both for the occasion of its presence, and as that occasion. As such, the question of sovereignty loses the hold of the monarch and becomes the play of forces between nomos, as a transcendental ground, and the continual process of grounding. And here, it is the continuity of grounding that needs to be emphasized. That continuity is the political as a continual state of enactment. What that continuity entails therefore is a conception of sovereignty in which sovereignty is identified with the maintenance of continuity, and thus the defence of a conception of continuity within which continuity is always open to the continual reinscription of discontinuities. The discontinuous marks the contingent status of nomoi. Sovereignty becomes the continual realization of the potentiality within, and for, grounding (‘the-appearing’). Pursuing this point necessitates recourse to the translation of a different Pindar fragment.

Von der Ruhe (Of Repose) is a translation of Fragment 109. Though it is an implicated site, implicit within it is the treatment of violence that occurs in Fragment 140c. The latter is essential for an understanding of *Von der Ruhe* because of the way violence is treated. Fragment 140c evokes actions in which the ‘violence’ (*βίαιον*) of the sea is calmed.²² With the abating of the sea

²¹ Hölderlin (1998) 93.

²² Hölderlin (2004) xi. 228. It should be noted that the term ‘repose’ (*Ruhe*) plays a fundamental role in Fichte’s philosophy. What would need to be pursued is the extent to which that possibility sounds in Hölderlin’s translation. See e.g. Fichte (1971a) 533.

repose is brought about.²³ Violence therefore was always internal, present as a quality—though only ever as a possible quality rather than a necessary one—of what is. Both this location and its interarticulation with a founding contingency are essential to Hölderlin's translation project.

Within Hölderlin's translation of Fragment 109 the continuity of 'the public sphere' (*das Öffentliche*) depends upon citizens having grasped the necessity for repose; what, in the translation, is called, 'The holy light of lordly repose' (*großmännlicher Ruhe heiliges Licht*). The Fragment positions repose against revolt, thus implicitly against what was identified earlier as sovereign or divine violence. The commentary locates this in relation to law. However, that act is more complex than first appears. Repose, is 'lordly'. Moreover it is given 'before laws' (*Ehe die Geseze*). While the positioning of the 'before' is important, of equal significance is the presence of 'law' in the plural. It is not therefore a question of what occurs before the law, or before law *tout court*, but before *laws* in which the use of the plural denotes the actual presence of law. (Law's actualization; its appearing.) Prior to that actualization the gods searched equally for a 'legislator' or a 'prince' to stem the hold of violence and enact repose. The commentary on the translation continues by placing—i.e. continually locating—the project of repose: placing by insisting on the necessary geography of repose. Hölderlin writes of a 'country's destiny' and the receptivity of a 'people' both to that project and also to the attempt to take on that destiny. Such a conception of place, equally such a conception of the relation between a people and destiny becomes the condition for repose. And it should be noted that in the formulation of the Fragment, 'Das Öffentliche' is a translation of *to koinon*, the latter being a term that brings with it as much a sense of the public as it does of commonality. Implicit in the move from Pindar to Hölderlin therefore is a refusal of commonality as a singularity such that the common would, or more disturbingly must have, unique determination. What occurs in its place is the move that defines commonality in relation to *nomos* as a transcendental condition. What is common therefore is *nomos*. Having linked repose and destiny such that they are only ever placed, Hölderlin then continues with the most striking lines of the Commentary on this translation.

²³ The role of the sons of Tyndareüs who, as the guardian of sailors, operates, according to Plutarch (the source of the Pindar fragment), not with the sailors but above them, rescuing them from their predicament. (See Plutarch, *The Obsolescence of Oracles*, 426c–d) By standing above, they tame the already enacted violence. The conjecture has to be that what is of interest to Hölderlin is the relationship of mortals to already enacted violence. They must act as 'princes' (or gods). The key to understanding Hölderlin's position is to recognize that what is at stake is acting out. Moreover, in Fragment 32, again, in part, a citation from Plutarch, Pindar refers to melody and thus movement. Nonetheless, he establishes a musical equivalent to 'repose' in terms of 'correct music' (*μουσικὴν ὀρθάν*).

Dann sind die Gesetze die Mittel, jenes Schicksal in seiner Ungestörtheit festzuhalten. Was für den Fürsten origineller Weise, das gilt, als Nachahmung für den eigentlicheren Bürger.

Then the laws are the means of maintaining this destiny undisturbed. What is valid for the prince in an original manner, is valid for a citizen as imitation.

While the last line presents the ‘prince’ in opposition to the citizen, earlier in this particular Commentary the prince is positioned in a relation of equivalence to ‘a legislator’ (*ein Gesetzgeber*). In other words, the evocation of the ‘lordly’ does not involve a straightforward distinction between royalty and citizens. Again, the distinction between that which pertains to the king as opposed to citizens is not in fact presented as an opposition. If there is a unity then it pertains to the ‘people’. Not the people of a nation, let alone the people as a nation, but people as a collectivity and thus as a commonality. The lines with which the Commentary to the translation of Fragment 109 ends necessitate joining together the plurality of law—*nomos* in its continual actualization as *nomoi*—and the means by which ‘repose’ is maintained. Maintaining repose is not the imposition of an order but the recognition of an intrinsic and thus always already present ordering process. The question concerns how the evocation of ‘imitation’ is to be understood.

‘Destiny’ opens a way towards tragedy. Within it ‘destiny’ would always need to be reconfigured as fate. While recognizing that such a predicament is possible, another opening is present. If ‘destiny’ (*Schicksal*) were inextricably tied up with laws, then its realization—a realization that could be described as the continuity of life—would be a description of the life of human being. Not the life of a given human being but the continuity of the being of being human. Life, in this latter sense, cannot be thought other than in an original relation to place and thus to an already present interarticulation of *nomos* and *polis*. This original relation has at the very minimum a twofold register, one that has already been noted in relation to *nomos*. On the one hand what is original is law as the transcendental condition. Equally, what is also original is the continual realization and actualization of that ground in and through both the necessity of *nomoi*, and the always already present demand for a place of actualization. If ‘destiny’ were to be disrupted then this need not be understood as equivocation or even conflict on the level of *nomoi*. Disruption, understood as that which is to be eschewed in the name of both ‘destiny’ and ‘repose’, would have a status similar to the emphatic sense of revolt that undoes the *polis* as the site of continuity.

Even though only the ‘prince’ is named in the final line of the Commentary, the original condition pertains equally to the ‘legislator’. In both instances maintaining laws within a domain of repose—taking this over as ‘destiny’—is

‘valid’ *ab initio*. That validity however is extended to the ‘genuine citizen’ (*eigentlicheren Bürger*). The extension involves a form of mimesis. What however does ‘imitation’ (*Nachahmung*) entail in this context? Perhaps the most germane way of answering this question is to let it emerge within the acknowledged presence of the abeyance of Platonism. If what prompts the necessary distancing of Platonic idealism is the positing of an unmediated outside, that not only is able to figure as an object of philosophical inquiry but also is causally involved in the generation of a given particular’s identity, then what is also put to one side is the Platonic conception of the mimetic. In the Platonic context the mimetic can be understood in terms of a showing in which the mimetic relation involves a form of making present that will always construct the relationship between what comes to presence (that which is shown in terms of its essential quality) and the showing.²⁴ The problematic element within such a relation concerns the conflation of the shown with the essential quality of what it is that comes to be shown. In general, for Plato, imitation—*μίμησις*—involves a continual slippage in which the inauthentic, as a continual risk in and for appearance, determines presence. Indeed, it is the inscription of this form of determination that makes the link established in the Commentary between imitation and authenticity so significant. To repeat the position already noted; what was originally ‘valid’ for the ‘prince’ and ‘legislator’, ‘is valid for the authentic citizen as imitation’.

The presence of the word ‘authentic’ has to be interpreted from the start as an interruption of the Platonic. What is interrupted at the same time is a structure of imitation that involves both externality and showing. The place of the opposition between outside and inside has been taken by a complex setting in which there is a continual acting out. (Here mimesis adopts a form that takes it much closer to the action-orientated conception found in Aristotle.) Imitation brings two defining elements with it. The first is the acting out. The second is a structure of response that is neither deterministic nor purely directive.²⁵ The directive would be the following of a rule or law that was grounded neither in ‘repose’ nor in ‘destiny’. On the contrary, nature, or the ‘idea’, thus pure immediacy, would ground such a set-up. What this means is that sovereignty located within immediacy is always marked by impossibility, a state of affairs that can only be maintained with violence. That particular sovereign’s response to the impossible therefore, the sovereign for whom the unmediated impossibility is disavowed continually and thus precisely not the response, that is, of either the ‘prince’ or the ‘legislator’,

²⁴ To this end see the treatment of mimesis in the *Cratylus*, in particular 423e1–424b1.

²⁵ It should not be thought that the terminology of mimesis is absent from Pindar. In Fragment 94b for example, the term is used in relation to the presentation of songs in which there is an acting out of the ‘siren’s loud songs’.

becomes a way of understanding violence. Imitation is linked therefore to the differing senses of continuity and acting out that have emerged thus far. Imitation defines freedom. (With this definition the already noted ‘law of calculation’ returns.) Even within Hölderlin there could be a further translation, one in which imitation was positioned beyond the hold of tragedy.

What then, now, of *Das Höchste*? If there is a moment that allows for a continuity of concern to be taken up then it is the two lines that occur in the middle of the Commentary: ‘Die strenge Mittelbarkeit ist aber das Gesetz. | Das wegen aber führt es gewaltig das gerechteste Recht mit allerhöchste Hand.’ (But the strictly mediate is the law. | And that is why, compellingly, it guides the justest justice with a sovereign hand.) What emerges with these lines is the explanation of law’s law-like quality. That quality inheres in law being the ‘strictly mediate’. Its compulsion, even its ‘violence’, to allow for the range of translations suggested by ‘gewaltig’, is always subordinated to its original state of mediation. Moreover, what also needs to be brought back is the link between law and ‘king’. Law is originally mediate. Law is ‘king’. It is important to note that the force of the originally mediate figures in Hölderlin’s writings as much in the claim that law is only recognizable through punishment, or the adoption of the Fichtean conception of self in which there is an original state of mediation in relation to the recognition of self-consciousness. There is always production through acting. A position that is there in the final lines of the early text *Judgement and Being*, in which the affirmed position is that identity is not equal to ‘Absolute being’.²⁶ Indeed, it is consistent with the argument that continues to be at work, namely that Absolute being is of necessity an impossibility. Once that position is able to open up the concerns of the Commentary then the force of the argument is that the already present mediation of the law (and here how that mediation occurs can be left to one side, perhaps as an act of translation) is what closes down the possible link between law as an Absolute and law’s realization. (One will always be at work within the other.) The Absolutization of law would have to locate the force of law within Absolute being. Were this to be the case then law would not have any regulative force because it would have been enacted through pure violence. Compulsion, for Hölderlin, has to do not just with the Absolute’s impossibility. That would be a merely negative description and hence it would enjoin a ‘not possible’ that was irrevocably touched by a structure of loss.²⁷ More productively, compulsion involves, of necessity, the constancy

²⁶ Hölderlin (1998) 7–8.

²⁷ Even though it cannot be argued in detail, it is nonetheless possible to suggest, in relation to the famous line from Germanien (Hölderlin 2004: x. 238–42) in which the gods are described as having ‘fled’, there is an important absence of lament. It is as though the present no longer being defined by the gods opens up a different relation. Of these gods, Hölderlin writes,

of enactment. Opposed to the static and a conception of the Absolute as having the status of the singular and the always separated is the continuity of mediation. This sense of the constancy, once linked to freedom and thus in refusing simple repetition, becomes the source of plurality. (While that constancy may contain echoes of Fichte's conception of a 'self-acting I' it need not be reduced to it.²⁸)

Das Höchste then becomes a form of staging. Not only is the staged linguistic, one in which words from one language encounter and echo within another—an echoing, to use Rainer Nägele's felicitous formulation, that is as much to do with the word as it is the structure;²⁹ the continual need to provide determinations—a move that becomes a description of translation—will have demanded in addition both the content and the form of judgement. Two elements continue to intertwine. There is the text and its interpretation. Equally there is the inescapable problem of translation. In regards to the latter it can be succinctly stated that the interpretative struggle concerns on the one hand the relationship between nomos and violence, and on the other the connection between sovereignty and nomos. In regards to the latter there is an important division within it between the identification of sovereignty with either the personage of the king or with law. The latter makes sovereignty importantly impersonal; an impersonality within which kings and rulers are only ever after-effects. The question of translation of course does not admit of neutrality. Translation is not indifferent to interpretation.

What occurs in both instances is a determination. Both, therefore, are finitude's having been enacted. However, if this is the case, if, that is, each act of translation or each interpretation takes on the quality of the finite, how is the infinite to be understood? There is the possibility of avoiding this mode of questioning by seeing both interpretation and translation as structured by the question of truth such that what matters is the extent to which a given translation or interpretation is true. The limit here is that differing translations (and the same will be true for interpretations) cannot be resolved by a simple recourse to truth. Indeed, the term that is appropriate in such contexts would be accuracy. The question of the relationship between the finitude and the infinite endures therefore. Posed this way it becomes clear that as an abstraction the question of

'ihr hattet eure Zeiten'. That time was there and now it is over. Hence, 'Wie anders ist!' The present becomes the site in which the 'yet to come' holds the distant as the necessarily irrecoverable. Rather than a lament, what emerges in its place is a type of affirmation. As such Hölderlin appears as a non-melancholic thinker. Again, there is no necessary suggestion that this makes Hölderlin a straightforward thinker of modernity. One of the most perspicuous attempts to identify what is valuable in Hölderlin for the project of modernity occurs as the Epilogue to Eric Santner's (2001: 130–46) work on Freud and Rosenzweig.

²⁸ Fichte (1971*b*) 467.

²⁹ See Nägele (1997).

translation/interpretation is precisely what is being acted within *Das Höchste*. Not literally within it, as though its presence were explicable in terms of its word-by-word presentation and line-by-line realization: it is being acted out in terms of its concerns, the relationship between the finite and the infinite. That abstraction however is only ever present as sites of enactment. When Pindar moves through Hölderlin—a move that has an inescapable reciprocity—there is a specific form of presence. The form pertains to the capacity of both texts to stage the concerns, within the act of translation, that work to define the present. The interpretation of Pindar Fragment 169a matters. It matters that Hölderlin can be understood as refusing a founding link between violence and the law and locates that relationship within a place and with a sense of commonality. However, to identify what matters, and the identification of it as mattering—an identification in the case of artwork that is given within the continual encounter of appearing and criticism—is to return to the concerns of translation. However, any return to those concerns is already to engage with the insistent problem of how finitude and thus singularity become possible and thus how such possibilities are positioned in relation to forms of universality or commonality (and thus how that relation is to be envisioned). While such problems have an initial generality, they can be quickly assimilated such that they are able to define contemporary political problems such as the divide between citizenship and the subject of right, or more exactly the role of violence within and for democracy (recognizing immediately that the term ‘democracy’ has become a counter within a large political game). These questions and problems have an insistent contemporary setting, which is illuminated, not by positing the presence of Pindar fragment 169a or Hölderlin’s *Das Höchste*—as though the classical edified the present—but by working through their concerns such that they are able to appear, perhaps in the form of a productive juxtaposition, as mattering now.

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Dryden's Ovid: Aesthetic Translation and the Idea of the Classic

Charles Martindale

The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, as far as possible, with one more possession of beauty.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

INTRODUCTION: TRANSLATION AND CLASSIC; DRYDEN'S OVID

In *The Western Canon* Harold Bloom issues us with a stark choice between 'aesthetic values' and 'the over-determinations of race, class, and gender': 'You must choose, for if you believe that all value ascribed to poems or plays or novels and stories is only a mystification in the service of the ruling class, then why should you read at all rather than go forth to serve the desperate needs of the exploited classes?'¹ For Bloom what matters about a classic text is its aesthetic quality only. This is to ignore the (in the broad sense) 'political' aspects of canon-making, as Bloom knows perfectly well. If one looks at the matter historically, neither of the extremes—that the canon (something constantly subject to change) is a conspiracy by the ruling elite, or that it is a collection of masterpieces that transcend history and constitute, in Matthew Arnold's famous words, 'the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world'²—has much to recommend it, the virtue of simplicity aside. A work that has been given classic status becomes involved in the institutions of interpretation (schools, universities, publishing houses, and so forth) that generate new readings for a complex of reasons, not

¹ Bloom (1995) 522.

² Arnold (1968) 151, from the Preface to the 1873 edition of *Literature and Dogma*; a variant occurs as a leitmotif throughout 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' (*Essays in Criticism, First Series*).

least the need to render the work modern, to accommodate it to changing circumstance and requirement. In all this the institution acts as a gatekeeper to what counts as legitimate exegesis, as Frank Kermode, a critic whom Bloom greatly admires and whose commitment to literature is as large as his own, has so amply shown. Translations can be seen as constituting one such mode of interpretation, or even the most important mode, since works deemed classics are more likely to be translated than others. E. R. Curtius (clearly no member of ‘the School of Resentment’ as Bloom likes to call his opponents) begins his discussion of the canon thus: ‘The formation of a canon serves to safeguard a tradition . . . the literary tradition of the school, the juristic tradition of the state, and the religious tradition of the Church: these are the three medieval world powers, *studium, imperium, sacerdotium*.’³ Quintilian, who, in his *Institutio Oratoria* (10. 1. 54), listed the ‘best’ authors, both Greek and Latin, in all the major genres for the practical benefit of the rising orator, uses the phrase *ordo a grammaticis datus* (‘the corpus of accepted writers given by the scholars of literature’); significantly *ordo* is the word for a social grouping within a hierarchy (the senatorial ‘order’, etc.). The word ‘classic’ (*scriptor classicus*) apparently first appears in something not wholly unlike its modern sense in Aulus Gellius (19. 8. 15) to denote ‘a first-class and tax-paying author, not a proletarian.’⁴ The connections between the literary and the social and the political are inscribed within the very vocabulary of canon-making.

Such points have become commonplaces. The political/institutional model for the classic is an established orthodoxy of our time (and clearly thus not in the least ‘radical’), and we badly need alternative models, if only ‘lest one good custom should corrupt the world’. Certainly it is easy to share Bloom’s concern at the flight from the aesthetic. Discussion today is too often trapped in a kind of binary thinking which assumes that the only alternative to an anti-aesthetic position is a naively dehistoricized notion of unchanging aesthetic value. I share Bloom’s concern about the hegemony of what may be called contextual or cultural criticism, or ideology critique⁵, too much of it

³ Curtius (1953) 256.

⁴ Gellius is recalling an expression of Fronto. Citroni (2006) 204–11 argues that this usage was neither standard nor identical with the modern one; rather Fronto’s *scriptores classici* referred capaciously to all writers who used language ‘correctly’. The word was successfully revived in its full modern sense to denote a major canonical author in the Renaissance.

⁵ I use this term for convenience to characterize in general terms a prevalent form of contemporary critical discourse, which in my view constitutes a real and present danger in today’s academy. This discourse thinks of itself as toughly ‘political’, while in practice it is often simply the expression of mystified moral preferences. Obviously the characterization given here is simplified and abbreviated; for a longer, more nuanced account see Martindale (2005). See also Guillory (1993) 25: ‘much of what passes for political analysis of historically canonical works is nothing more than the passing of moral judgment on them’. It does not follow that I am opposed to political or ideological analyses of poetry conducted with proper theoretical rigour.

now routinized and bland. This 'ideology criticism' is not rigorously Marxist, but it could be called Marxisant in some vague sense because it uses a watered-down version of the base/superstructure model. The constellation of factors deemed relevant to interpretation (almost always including race, class, and gender) is taken for granted in a way that could be seen as itself ideological. The critic knows what the 'context' to a text is, indeed what a 'text' is, before he or she has done any thinking or work—the results are predetermined. Such criticism is often authoritarian, even totalitarian, because of its desire to suppress particular discourses as mere mystifications of some other dominant discourse, today usually called the 'political' but often better described as ethical—not far indeed from the kind of respectable bourgeois morality the poet Baudelaire so hated. It has always been a mystery to me why criticism of this kind should be regarded as self-evidently meritorious, morally and politically. It is not infrequently condescending to its objects; it also tends to look for what is shared between texts, to homogenize. By contrast, aesthetic judgement as theorized by Kant in his Third Critique is concerned with the singular; because it is not end-directed or determinate, it is always potentially revolutionary—we might be jolted out of anything we knew before. Kant believes that among the things that human beings can do is to estimate an object *freely*.

There are different traditions of reading, which include the communal (as in the schoolroom) and the disputatious (as in medieval Paris). To these Bloom prefers a third tradition, the meditative; for him reading is a solitary activity, privately conducted; its purpose is not to show us how to live, or what we should praise or blame (as many theorists in antiquity and the Renaissance supposed), but to provide consolation for our mortality in a confrontation with our inwardness. And canons too need not be figured as institutional only, they can be personal, the books and works of art that form the indispensable repertoire of an individual. In *The Renaissance* the classicist and aesthetic critic Walter Pater includes essays not only on the grandly canonical masters Leonardo and Michelangelo, but on such then little-known and idiosyncratic figures as Luca della Robbia, Botticelli, and Pico della Mirandola. Of Botticelli Pater observes: 'there is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere; and these too have their place in general culture, and must be interpreted to it by those who have felt their charm strongly, and are often the object of a special diligence and a consideration wholly affectionate, *just because there is not about them the stress of a great name and authority*' (my italics).⁶ Pater uses the term 'House Beautiful' to describe a shared space of coexistence, not hierarchically organized,

⁶ Pater (1980) 48.

for all artists (whether 'great' or 'small') to whom positive value is, or has been, assigned by any individual.⁷

In this chapter, I shall use Dryden's versions of Ovid to set out, and explore, an aesthetic model of how a translation might operate in relation to a classic text and indeed become itself a classic. Both Dryden and Ovid are interestingly liminal in this regard. Both retain, within the institutions of interpretation, at least some of the authority of a canonical name, but neither can be said to be quite straightforwardly a living classic. In recent decades Ovid has seen a significant revival of interest among academic classicists after three centuries marked in general by a decline in his status, a revival also reflected to a degree in the wider culture (one could cite the collection of 1994 edited by Michael Hofmann and James Lasdun under the title *After Ovid: New Metamorphoses* to which forty-two poets contributed, or the late Poet Laureate Ted Hughes's popular *Tales from Ovid*, published three years later). But in general, like other ancient authors, he is a kind of dead or dormant classic, his name retaining some residual potency perhaps, but his works hardly widely read, certainly not in the original. Meanwhile Dryden is slipping off the syllabus altogether. Sir Walter Scott cites lines from *Fables* describing how the charms of the sleeping Iphigenia stupefied the 'man-beast' Cymon and turned him into a 'judge of beauty'⁸ as a sovereign instance of 'a strain of . . . beautiful and melodious poetry', observing that 'it is only sufficient to mention that passage to recall it to the recollection of every general reader, and of most who have read any poetry at all.'⁹ Today Dryden, who (notwithstanding any faults or limitations he may be held to have) is among the greatest wielders of the English language, increasingly lacks a general readership; indeed university students are more likely to encounter the works of Aphra Behn, interest in which, it seems fair to say, is fuelled more by gender politics than by the judgement of taste.¹⁰

Dryden had a lifelong interest in Ovid.¹¹ Although he never attempted anything on the scale of his complete Virgil, over his career he translated a not

⁷ See further in the next section. ⁸ 'Cymon and Iphigenia', 147, 158.

⁹ Quoted Reverand (1988) 2. For *Fables* see, in addition to Reverand, Sloman (1985), Winn (2001), Cotterill (2004).

¹⁰ Again I should make clear that I am in no way opposed to a revived interest in seventeenth-century women poets, merely to the neglect of a great writer. Likewise I was struck that for my two teenage sons 'Shelley' meant Mary Shelley only. Mary and Percy Bysshe are both considerable writers, but it is still odd, and significant of an important cultural shift, that they did not know that Mary was married to a major poet (and one himself 'radical' in both politics and poetics).

¹¹ David Hopkins in particular has written at length and with great insight about Dryden and Ovid; see Hopkins (1976), (1985), (1986) 177–80, 190–6, (1988), (2001). See also Tomlinson (2003) esp. 72–89, 101–20.

inconsiderable portion of the whole œuvre, three of the *Amores*, three of the *Heroides* (one a revision of an earlier translation by the Earl of Mulgrave), a whole book of the *Ars Amatoria*, and large parts of the *Metamorphoses*, including two complete books. This process reached a climax in the *Fables*, which includes some of his very finest translations of Ovid, among which I would certainly single out, as do many of Dryden's critics, 'Baucis and Philemon', 'Cinyras and Myrrha' (Scott called this 'beautiful and unequalled'¹²), 'Ceyx and Alcyone', and 'Of the Pythagorean Philosophy'. His achievements as an Ovidian did not go unrecognized. John Oldmixon in 1728 commented: 'Dryden seems to have entered as far into the genius of Ovid as any of his translators. That genius has more of equality with his own than Virgil's, and consequently his versions of Ovid are more perfect than those of Virgil'.¹³ There were occasions, at least, when Dryden himself seemed to share this assessment. In the Preface to *Examem Poeticum* (1693) he called his Ovid versions 'the best of all my endeavours in this kind', in part because Ovid was, to an especial degree, 'according to my genius',¹⁴ though admittedly he claims special 'congeniality' with a number of different authors in different places. The aged Dryden, disappointed in worldly affairs, seems to have identified with Ovid the exile,¹⁵ though such disappointment did nothing at all to dim Dryden's muse—in Pope's famous words, 'his fire, like the sun's, shined clearest towards its setting'.¹⁶ Dryden also expressed, throughout his life, fairly consistent reservations about Ovid, in particular his supposed stylistic excesses, those puerilities or 'boyisms', to use Dryden's own coinage,¹⁷ that had been condemned from antiquity onwards (a point to which we shall return). In the Preface to *Fables*, remarkably for the date, he judges Ovid inferior to Chaucer: Chaucer, knowing 'when to leave off'¹⁸ and writing 'with more simplicity', avoids Ovid's faults, and also gives us 'God's plenty', that comprehensive range of human personality and experience, which is 'ever the same . . . though everything is altered'.¹⁹

¹² Kinsley and Kinsley (1971) 374.

¹³ Quoted Tissol (2005) 204.

¹⁴ Hammond and Hopkins (2000) 218–19.

¹⁵ So Reverand (1988) 24; Davis (2004) 82.

¹⁶ Quoted Reverand (1988) 3.

¹⁷ On this word see Hammond and Hopkins (2005) 66.

¹⁸ This pointedly reverses the famous negative judgement on Ovid in Seneca the Elder (*Controversiae* 9. 5. 17): *nam et Ovidius nescit quod bene cessit relinquere. . . . Aiebat autem Scaurus rem veram: non minus magnam virtutem esse scire dicere quam scire desinere* ('For Ovid too is incapable of leaving well alone. . . . Scaurus was quite right in saying that to know how to stop is as important a quality as to know how to speak' (Loeb trans. M. Winterbottom)).

¹⁹ Hammond and Hopkins (2005), 67–8, 76.

AN AESTHETIC THEORY OF TRANSLATION

What might an aesthetic, or ‘art-for-art’s-sake’, theory of translation look like? My key claim will be that, where other theories of translation involve some kind of hierarchy (for example, a ranking of ‘source’ and ‘target’ text, or of an ‘original’ and ‘version’), an aesthetic theory of translation on a Kantian model can disrupt or question hierarchical assumptions. A good place to start such an enquiry is the preface to *The Early Italian Poets* (1861), that still neglected masterpiece of aesthetic translation by a leading figure in English Aestheticism, the poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a collection later retitled *Dante and his Circle*, which includes a complete translation of the *Vita Nuova*. Rossetti anticipates the claim of Ezra Pound (now a commonplace) that a translation is always an interpretation, and indeed the best and completest form of interpretation we have: ‘a translation (involving as it does the necessity of settling many points without discussion,) remains perhaps the most direct form of commentary’. But for Rossetti the cardinal ‘commandment’ is ‘that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one’: ‘The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, as far as possible, with one more possession of beauty.’²⁰ As Jerome McGann, author of the best modern critical study of Rossetti, quips, ‘One good poem deserves another.’²¹ On such a view translation is not a matter of abstracting a meaning from the whole and then turning that into a different language, what Walter Benjamin in ‘The Task of the Translator’ stigmatizes as ‘the inaccurate transmission of an inessential content’ which characterizes ‘inferior translation’.²² Rather, just as the Kantian judgement of taste (‘this poem is beautiful’) is a judgement of both form and content, so in aesthetic translation form and content are translated together to produce a new thing of beauty. This is not quite what scholars mean when they talk about ‘getting Ovid right’. It involves the ability, *inter alia*, to be inward with both the languages involved. T. M. Knox, the translator of Hegel, notes the formidable difficulties involved in rendering Hegel’s ‘precise and rigid’ philosophical terminology: ‘Some day, perhaps, someone who thinks in English will re-think Hegel’s philosophy and its terminology and put it all into English.’²³ That could produce a form of aesthetic translation; but until then we have to make do with a scholarly version like Knox’s, with the appropriate glosses and explanations.

²⁰ Rossetti (1911) 283.

²¹ McGann (2000) 38.

²² Benjamin (1992) 70–1.

²³ Knox (1975) 1, preface pp. viii–ix.

For reasons set out at length in Kant's Third Critique, there can be no rules for beauty, no 'universal formula', to use Pater's phrase.²⁴ As Kant puts it in section 34, 'I must feel the pleasure immediately in the representation of the object, and I cannot be talked into it by any grounds of proof.'²⁵ So too there can be no rules for making beautiful translations, only retrospective judgements as to whether beauty has been achieved in any particular instance. Pound (whose practice as a translator was indeed much influenced by Rossetti) saw how it was done in the case of *The Early Italian Poets*: 'Rossetti made his own language.'²⁶ These translations are in no way like standard Victorian poems. Instead Rossetti identified himself completely with his poetic precursors, especially Dante, reimagining their texts and rewriting their words in his language.²⁷ His aim, as he says, is not an unachievable 'literality' (though these versions are often quite literal in their handling of form), but rather 'fidelity'. To achieve this, he adopts what he twice calls 'an inner standing point',²⁸ a point within, as it were, rather than outside the work he is rendering. Similarly Dryden, in his 'transfusions', while remaining himself, becomes at the same time one with his author to the degree that he uses the metaphors (or are they for him metaphors?) of consanguinity and metempsychosis.²⁹ For all his confidence Rossetti cannot match Dryden as a technician (though his awkwardness has its own virtue). Translation, as Pound observed, is usually 'a thankless and desolate undertaking';³⁰ great translations are much rarer than great original poems. Most translations, even the finest, contain clumsy or inert passages (unnecessary inversions and so forth) that have no particular artistic value but are simply the result of the difficulties of following and reproducing another text within a particular metrical scheme. Not so Dryden's: to use Scott's word, he triumphantly 'endenizens' his author,³¹ in page after confident page. The pacing is superbly varied, the stresses and emphases fall invariably where they are most effective, the sentences unfold with energy, variety, and complete control. In Dryden's hands Ovid, while remaining Ovid, has become, wholly, an English poet. Dryden makes this seem so easy that we can forget just how extraordinary a

²⁴ Pater (1980) p. xix. I have defended a Kantian version of aesthetic judgement at length in Martindale (2005); in particular, in ch. 1, I set out Kant's principal claims as I understand them, and attempt to show their continued validity.

²⁵ Kant (1952) 141; cf. the whole of § 33, pp. 139–41.

²⁶ Pound (1935) 399.

²⁷ The best discussion is in McGann (2000), especially ch. 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. xiv.

²⁹ See Hopkins (2001).

³⁰ Pound (1935) 148.

³¹ Kinsley and Kinsley (1971) 371.

feat it is. Reading a page of Sandys's Ovid, or Golding's, after any one of Dryden's, should provide a sufficient demonstration.

'Lost in translation,' we often say; it is rarer to speak of gain. Dryden, however, is happy to balance gain and loss; in the Preface to *Fables* while conceding that 'something must be lost in all transfusion,' he dares to add that 'what beauties I lose in some places, I give to others which had them not originally'.³² The notes on the translations in the now completed Longman's Dryden (to which I am much indebted throughout this essay) regularly feature the words 'D's addition'. This is a convenient shorthand obviously, meaning that there is no word or phrase in Ovid that corresponds precisely to one in Dryden. But perhaps the word 'addition' implies too lexical a view of equivalence. The relevant measure of such equivalence for Dryden's 'Baucis and Philemon' (*say*) might be the whole tale in Ovid (including its reception), or even the entire *Metamorphoses*, rather than small semantic units. Garth Tissol has devoted an essay to such 'additions,' with numerous examples, and he quotes the commentator Guy Lee's observation that Dryden 'can not only reproduce Ovidian epigram but can father epigrams of his own on Ovid, and no one who did not know the original could tell the difference'.³³ Thus in the couplet from Dido's letter (*Heroides* 7),

Thy starved companions, cast ashore, I fed,
Thyself admitted to my crown and bed (91–2)

the second line, with its striking syllepsis, is, in one sense, not 'in' Ovid, but, in another, Ovid wrote it along with the rest. Found in translation.

How then, within the aesthetic, should one configure the relationship between what are often called 'original' and 'version,' or 'source text' and 'target text'? Within the Kantian aesthetic there is no hierarchy. Each judgement of taste is necessarily singular: 'since I must present the object immediately to my feeling of pleasure or displeasure, and that, too, without the aid of concepts, such judgements cannot have the quantity of judgements with objective general validity'.³⁴ To organize a series of such judgements into a hierarchy, while it may be perfectly legitimate for particular purposes, necessarily involves an appeal to (logical) criteria that are non-aesthetic (there are no rules for beauty). As the Italian aesthetician Benedetto Croce puts it, relishing the resulting paradoxes: 'A short poem is aesthetically equal to a long poem; a tiny little picture or sketch, to an altar picture or a fresco. A letter may be no less artistic than a novel. Even a beautiful translation is as original

³² Hammond and Hopkins (2005) 81–2.

³³ Tissol (2004) 184, 183; a good example from 'The Transformation of Io into a Heifer' is 'And in his daughter did his daughter want' ('The First Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', 886).

³⁴ Kant (1952) 55.

as an original work!³⁵ When the poet and critic Charles Tomlinson suggests that, in 'Baucis and Philemon', Dryden surpasses 'his great Latin original by a very wide margin indeed',³⁶ he issues what might be a valuable provocation (can a 'translation' be better than an 'original?'), but he is not engaging in a pure judgement of taste. Pater here provides us with a useful model, as we have seen. The 'House Beautiful', where the diachronic is organized into a synchrony in which even opposites can coexist in a condition of harmony and equality, and which, in Pater's account, 'the creative minds of all generations—the artists and those who have treated life in the spirit of art—are always building together, for the refreshment of the human spirit',³⁷ is potentially hospitable to everything to which value has ever been accorded. This extraordinary critical generosity finds one of its most memorable expressions in the last sentence of the essay on Pico: 'the essence of humanism is that belief... that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality—no language they have spoken, nor oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate, or expended time and zeal'.³⁸ In thus not inscribing hierarchy the 'House Beautiful' is unlike T. S. Eliot's more famous and influential concept of Tradition which in other ways it so substantially anticipates; we can accordingly use it to try to theorize both the classic and the process of translation *aesthetically* (where Eliot's Tradition can be figured as 'political'). Wolfgang Iser describes some of its entailments well:

The 'House Beautiful' is conceived as an almost total identification of art and history. There is no operative principle of selection; instead it blends together all contrasting movements into a totality of life that continues to expand indefinitely. Individual situations and the changeability of history are equally preserved and rendered contemporaneous... This ever-growing collection should not, in spite of its perpetuity, be mistaken for a mundane reflection of eternity; instead it adumbrates an infinity hidden in human finiteness, allowing man to experience his own unlimited possibilities.³⁹

Within the model of the 'House Beautiful' Ovid and Dryden as his translator, source text and target text, can exist alongside each other without hierarchy.

We are, whatever we may say to the contrary, generally so enamoured of hierarchy that this feature of the Kantian aesthetic is either ignored or even taken to be a stumbling block. Curiously, 'radical' objections to the aesthetic are very often premised on an erroneous impression that it necessarily sets up hierarchies among objects, for example between popular and high culture,

³⁵ Croce (1995) 46.

³⁶ Tomlinson (2003) 109.

³⁷ Pater (1913) 241.

³⁸ Pater (1980) 38.

³⁹ Iser (1987) 82.

but Kant from the opening sentence of the Third Critique radically uncouples the judgement of the beautiful from the characteristics of an object. Most models of translation involve a hierarchy and a Platonic ontology of origination. The work to be translated is primary, the translation secondary. A translation, like the work of art in *Republic* 10, is a copy of a prior original, and thus at a further remove from reality (in Plato, of course, the 'original' is itself a copy of the form). Deconstructionists and postmodernists, suspicious of claims of origination, like to disturb the distinction between primary and secondary. One such disturbance is to say that every translation creates a new original *as an effect*.⁴⁰ This, however, might imply that it is the translation which should be figured as prior; the hierarchy would be reversed, but not abolished. So more promising, perhaps, is Hans-Georg Gadamer's view of the ontology of portraiture (making a portrait can easily be seen as a form of translation into a different medium).⁴¹ A portrait is not like an image in a mirror, rather it involves 'an increase in being', which is an increase in being not only in the form of the new thing but also for the original, apart from its own independent being:

the relation of the picture to the original is basically quite different than in the case of a copy. *It is no longer a one-sided relationship.* That the picture has its own reality means the reverse for what is pictured, namely that it comes to presentation in the representation. It presents itself there. It does not follow that it is dependent on this particular presentation in order to appear. It can also present itself as what it is in other ways. But if it presents itself in this way, this is no longer any incidental event but belongs to its own being. Every such presentation is an ontological event and occupies the same ontological level as what is represented. By being presented it experiences, as it were, an *increase in being*.⁴²

As a result 'a picture is not a copy of a copied being, but is in ontological communion with what is copied'.⁴³ For Gadamer a work of art is not an unchanging Platonic essence, rather it exists only by 'coming-to-presentation', and each such coming-to-presentation is different. It is not difficult to figure translation as yet one more way in which a work may come to presentation.

In general, the aesthetic invites, and welcomes, repetition, as a result of that desire to beget on beauty which is described in Plato's *Symposium*. For as Elaine Scarry, author of a beautiful book on beauty, observes, beauty 'seems to incite, even require, the act of replication':

Beauty brings copies of itself into being. It makes us draw it, take photographs of it, or describe it to other people. . . . A beautiful face drawn by Verrocchio suddenly glides

⁴⁰ Bassnett (1991) xv.

⁴¹ Gadamer (1989) 134–64.

⁴² Gadamer (1989) 140.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

into the perceptual field of a young boy named Leonardo. The boy copies the face, then copies the face again. Then again and again and again. . . . He draws it over and over, just as Pater (who tells us all this about Leonardo) replicates—now in sentences—Leonardo's acts, so that the essay reenacts its subject, becoming a sequence of faces: an angel, a Medusa, a woman and child, a Madonna, John the Baptist, St Anne, La Gioconda.⁴⁴

An aesthetic translation begins with a judgement of taste, and involves the creation of a new beautiful object by an act of aesthetic repetition, which is not like a purely instrumental form of copying.

Does this mean that, within the aesthetic, the relationship between original and version is irrelevant, in respect that is of their beauty? If the purpose is to construct a hierarchy, then the answer must be 'yes'. 'This is a good, or bad, translation' is not a judgement of taste, since it implies a prior and definite concept of what constitutes merit in a translation. If, however, a play of perceived differences or similarities is not used to condemn or arrange in a hierarchy, or in general to achieve the closure of determination, it can be part of aesthetic experience. For the experience of beauty, as Kant describes it, consists in a pleasurable free play of our mental faculties, which makes it possible, in the words of Lisa Samuels, 'to imagine what one doesn't know'.⁴⁵ Within Kant's system it is 'the aesthetic idea' which perhaps best describes this phenomenon: that is 'a representation of the imagination, annexed to a given concept, with which, in the free employment of imagination, such a multiplicity of partial representations are bound up, that no expression indicating a definite concept can be found for it'.⁴⁶

The aesthetic, unlike some other approaches to literature, thus has no problem with the idea of translation. A translation has another text (potentially) conjoined with it, so there is complexity for the mind to roam over. The complex and layered character of the text serves to provoke a free play of mind, involving both a direct encounter with the text we are reading and our memory of another text, in what becomes a new singular experience ('this translation is beautiful'). The mental faculties operate as it were between the lines, in a sort of interlinear shuttle (of course a translation can also be read, perfectly satisfactorily, without any reference to an original at all, in a different singular experience). Our minds operate in the space opened up by the act of translation.⁴⁷ This gap is not exactly the gap between original and version (as though that were evident and known), for to figure matters thus is too much like the application of a prior rule. Rather, the interplay between two forms of aesthetic experience, reading the original, and reading the translation, may constitute one way of realizing the free play of imagination and understanding

⁴⁴ Scarry (1999) 3.

⁴⁵ Quoted McGann (2000) 58.

⁴⁶ Kant (1952) 179.

⁴⁷ On this see Iser (1995).

in the Kantian judgement of taste, and thus of experiencing that freedom from prior concepts which avoids the 'subsumption of what is to be grasped under a presupposition'⁴⁸ and which is the special virtue of the aesthetic.

Walter Benjamin was especially alive to the virtues of such interlinearity ('all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines'⁴⁹). Dr Johnson complained of Pope's *Imitations of Horace* (where the Latin text was printed parallel with Pope's version) that 'between Roman images and English manners there will be an irreconcilable dissimilitude, and the work will be generally uncouth and party-coloured'.⁵⁰ But the play of likeness and difference may be the animating point of the procedure, one in which each text reads the other, and at times resists the other. Eric Griffiths, commenting on Dryden's phrase about the translator's task, 'to conform our genius to his', writes 'Dryden did not mean that he attempted an impersonation of the past writer and his world but he gauged where he was near to and where remote from his original, and, in discovering that, discovered himself'.⁵¹ This describes a much more complex, nuanced, and reciprocal process than 'the ethnocentric violence' of which Lawrence Venuti, in an enormously influential study, accuses Dryden and other practitioners of what he terms 'domesticating' translation.⁵² Translation is indeed often figured by post-colonial critics as a form of colonization. But one might then ask who is the colonizer.

For Benjamin 'translatability' is what marks out the great work of literature, the classic.⁵³ Translatability does not mean that the text has been translated, or translated satisfactorily, rather that the work *demand*s, as it were, to be translated, to communicate universally—the work of art has the capacity to project itself into other texts. For Benjamin this seems to involve the concept of an Adamic pure language which makes such linguistic transfers possible. In a more fully secularized version we might argue that the possibility of communication across languages underlies the idea of the classic if only as a heuristic necessity. Further, it seems analogous to the idea of 'universal communicability' in Kant's aesthetic theory⁵⁴ (this does not mean that in practice we agree with one another in the judgements of taste we make, only that we claim that our judgements, though subjective, have validity for others as well as ourselves⁵⁵). In Benjamin's words, 'languages are not strangers to

⁴⁸ Iser (1995) 44. ⁴⁹ Benjamin (1992) 82.

⁵⁰ Johnson (2006) iv. 78. ⁵¹ Griffiths (1994) 123.

⁵² Venuti (1995) *passim*, esp. ch. 2, 'Canon'. Venuti's (equally reductive) opposing term is 'foreignizing'.

⁵³ Benjamin (1992) 71–2.

⁵⁴ Kant (1952) 146–50.

⁵⁵ 'All that it holds out for is that we are justified in presupposing that the same subjective conditions of judgement which we find in ourselves are universally present in every man, and further that we have rightly subsumed the given Object under these conditions' (Kant (1952) 147).

one another' but have 'reciprocal relationship'.⁵⁶ (Two languages, we might say, can communicate without there being a single shared meaning as it were 'behind' them.) A world without translation would involve an inevitable Balkanization of the human mind and would not allow for universal communicability. Translation thus helps to realize the ambition of the aesthetic for such communicability. On this more optimistic model Dryden's translations are better seen as tributes made in gratitude to the impact on him of admired fellow poets than as acts of invasive appropriation, as Dryden does business with a past that for him is always also present, always alive.

Perhaps Dryden's most famous contribution to translation theory is his tripartite division of translations, in the *Preface to Ovid's Epistles*, into metaphor, paraphrase, and imitation. The purpose is to establish a hierarchy, and one that is indeed somewhat self-interested. The sense-for-sense translation that Dryden terms 'paraphrase', as practised by himself and endorsed by the authority of Horace and others, is figured as the virtuous mean between excessive literalism and excessive freedom. It is not clear how far this taxonomy, although it obviously has its uses, is truly coherent intellectually (metaphrase and imitation derive from quite different underlying principles, and indeed suggest different accounts of how texts mean, so it is difficult to see how paraphrase could be a compromise between them). Moreover, even if we accept these categories for heuristic purposes, most translations, including Dryden's own, in practice do not fit wholly into one of them; 'polished elephant', for example, from the Virgil (3. 595), metaphrases the Virgilian metonymy (itself modelled on Greek usage) *elephantus* for ivory. More productive, at least to my thinking, and certainly more consonant with an aesthetic theory, is the principle Dryden puts forward in the *Preface to Sylvae*: 'the maintaining the character of an author which distinguishes him from all others, and makes him appear that individual poet whom you would interpret'.⁵⁷ This brings Dryden close to another familiar aestheticist position. Rossetti, in his 1861 preface, stresses the difficulties faced by the practitioner of rhythmical translation: 'His path is like that of Aladdin through the enchanted vaults: many are the precious fruits and flowers which he must pass by unheeded in search for the lamp alone; happy if at last, when brought to light, it does not prove that his old lamp has been exchanged for a new one,—glittering indeed to the eye, but scarcely of the same virtue nor with the same genius at its summons.'⁵⁸ 'Virtue', 'as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem',⁵⁹ is the word that, in the 'Preface' to *The Renaissance*, Pater too uses for the aesthetic quality of an artwork, 'the property each has of affecting

⁵⁶ Benjamin (1992) 73.

⁵⁷ Hammond (1995*b*) 240.

⁵⁸ Rossetti (1911) 283.

⁵⁹ Pater (1980) p. xx. Subsequent quotations from pp. xxi, xxii.

one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure', which it is the job of the aesthetic critic, or by analogy the translator, to put into words: 'His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others.' The process starts in the subjective response of an individual perceiver, who must discriminate his or her own impression, realize it distinctly; but—and here as elsewhere Pater proves a good Kantian in the end—that subjective impression is potentially communicable to others. For example, Pater's famous meditation on the 'Mona Lisa' is his attempt to communicate to us the beauty of the painting as he has experienced it. Pater chooses his keyword with a scholar's precision and sense of its derivation and history: the 'virtue' of something is both the quality we value in it and the quiddity that for us makes that thing what it is and not something else.

In Dryden's theory the distinguishing character of an author is to be respected in the large (indeed 'distinguish' is the keyword in the *Preface To Sylvae*⁶⁰). Johnson saw the point at once: 'rugged magnificence is not to be softened: hyperbolic ostentation is not to be repressed, nor sententious affectation to have its points blunted. A translator is to be like his author: it is not his business to excel him.'⁶¹ Dryden observes how most translators make the authors they translate sound alike: 'not only the thoughts but the style and versification of Virgil and Ovid are very different, yet I see, even in our best poets . . . that they have confounded their several talents, and, by endeavouring only at the sweetness and harmony of numbers, have made them both so much alike that, if I did not know the originals, I should never be able to judge by the copies which was Virgil and which was Ovid.'⁶² This is not the case with Dryden's own mature translations. If it seems so, to the beginner or to the casual reader, that is because Dryden's own 'virtue'—what C. S. Lewis so well characterized as his 'exuberant power', 'the fine breezy, sunshiny weather of the man's mind at its best . . . the sweetness (unsurpassed in its own way) of nearly all his versification'⁶³—eclipses, for those less at home in the general idiom, the strong differences in his versions of different authors. Thus Dryden's Lucretius evinces 'a certain kind of noble pride, and positive assertion of his opinions' that in his view was 'the distinguishing character of Lucretius', very different from, say, 'the inimitable tenderness' of Theocritus.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Sloman (1985) 11–12. Cf. Griffiths (1994) 123, on 'individuate' in *Preface to Ovid's Epistles*: 'nor must we understand the language only of the poet, but his particular turn of thoughts, and of expression, which are the characters that distinguish, and as it were individuate him from all other writers' (Hammond 1995a: 388–9). This formulation is perhaps overly formalistic in comparison with the version in the *Preface to Sylvae*.

⁶¹ Johnson (2006) ii. 125.

⁶² Hammond (1995b) 240–1.

⁶³ Lewis (1969) 188, 194.

⁶⁴ Hammond (1995b) 246, 252.

In the case of Ovid this approach meant that Dryden did not tone down the elements of exuberant excess that many critics had censured. David Hopkins argues that the poet in Dryden vanquished the more superficial critic, to reveal profound affinities between himself and Ovid.⁶⁵ Perhaps so, but Dryden's reservations about Ovid seem to have been held, consistently and—as far as we can tell—deeply, over many years (as we have seen, he expressed, unusually for his time, a preference for Chaucer). We might rather say that Dryden believed in respecting the virtue of his author, whether or not that virtue was, in his view, entirely virtuous. Of course, in any particular case, another reader may well not share Dryden's response (in that sense too a translation is always an interpretation). For Dryden, 'the most distinguishing part' of Horace seemed 'his briskness, his jollity, and his good humour'.⁶⁶ This view can be experienced and enjoyed in what Dryden thought his 'masterpiece in English', his superb version of Ode 3. 29, even by those who think that Dryden's formulation misses the melancholy that is seldom far from the surface of the Odes.

The *Fables* exhibits, to a particularly high degree, the extraordinary variousness of Dryden's taste, his evident desire to experience to the full what C. S. Lewis thought the great potential benefit of literature, seeing with other eyes: 'Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see.'⁶⁷ Felicity Rosslyn, for whom Dryden is a translator, not a poet, takes a negative view of all this; she finds in Dryden's ability to commune with so many authors a lack of commitment: 'in a sense, Dryden did not *mean* what he wrote'.⁶⁸ She expresses surprise that Dryden could relish both Juvenal and Horace, both Virgil and Homer: 'what freedom does he have that most of us do not?' It seems odd for an academic in particular to rebuke the joys of varied reading, catholicity of taste, and openness to opinions that lie in part beyond one's own. The positive results of this catholicity are well described by Paul Hammond:

Dryden's work is the achievement of a man who in many respects lived in a different world from that of his historical contemporaries, one whose companions were not only Oldham, Dorset, and Congreve, but Homer, Virgil, and Shakespeare . . . there is a serenity—indeed, a positive joy—in Dryden's later work which is that of a man who has shaped his own world, and peopled it with his chosen companions. As the world turned on its dark side, he read and thought himself into being a classic.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Hopkins (1988).

⁶⁶ Hammond (1995*b*) 254–5.

⁶⁷ Lewis (1961) 141.

⁶⁸ Rosslyn (2001), quotations from pp. 22, 29.

⁶⁹ Hammond (2000) 14. See also Reverand (1988) for the value of the competing voices of *Fables*.

As a bookish reader, Dryden knows, quite as well as any modern reception theorist, that past texts do not come to readers unmediated, and he embodies that insight in the texture of his translations. Take his ‘Baucis and Philemon’, which combines a range of tones in an Ovidian manner, at once humorous and homely, touching, and touched by magic. Scholars term a narrative of this type in which gods are entertained by mortals a ‘theoxenia’. There are parallels in the Bible, in particular stories in Genesis about Abraham and Lot. When in *Paradise Lost* Milton describes how Adam and Eve entertain Raphael to a sumptuous vegetarian meal in Eden, he combines the two traditions, shaping the episode so that it recalls Ovid’s Baucis and Philemon quite as much as the biblical prototypes.⁷⁰ In his turn Dryden reads Ovid back through the tradition, with glancing allusions to both Milton and the Bible. This does not mean that in any simple fashion Dryden Christianizes Ovid; rather his theoxenia embodies recognition of the necessary workings of reception and of the literary tradition in shaping our responses to a text. Even though Dryden does not forget other relevant texts that resonate, for legitimate reasons, in his imagination as he reads Ovid, Baucis and Philemon remain pagans in a pagan world, an example of that mutuality which characterizes a good marriage as much in Ovid as in Milton, a mutuality that persists even into the very moment of metamorphosis, given by Dryden thus:

Old Baucis is by old Philemon seen
 Sprouting with sudden leaves of sprightly green;
 Old Baucis looked where old Philemon stood,
 And saw his lengthened arms a sprouting wood. (181–4)

Kant theorizes the judgement of taste as a dialectic of perceiving subject and perceived object (though not of course the ‘thing-in-itself’); we learn much about Dryden from his reception of Ovid, but it is Ovid who puts Dryden’s capacities into such fruitful play.

DRYDEN’S IO: A BEAUTIFUL TRANSLATION?

My primary concern so far has been to explore what an aesthetic theory of translation might involve. I want now to ask what a beautiful translation might look like, a related but distinct question. Within a Kantian aesthetic framework, such an enquiry can only be conducted by means of examples. According to the Third Critique (sect. 34), the job of the critic is not to issue

⁷⁰ For the details see Martindale (1986) 184–8. For Dryden’s ‘Baucis and Philemon’ see Hopkins (1976); Hopkins (1986) 191–4; Reverand (1988) 84–6; Tomlinson (2003) 108–10.

general rules: the 'matter upon which it is competent for critics to exercise their subtlety' (there may be some irony here) is 'not one of exhibiting the determining ground of aesthetic judgements of this kind in a universally applicable formula—which is impossible'. Rather the critic's task is either what Kant calls the 'science': 'the investigation of the faculties of cognition and their function in these judgements' (Kant's own main concern in the Critique), or what he calls the 'art': 'the illustration, by the analysis of examples, of their mutual subjective finality, the form of which in a given representation has been shown above to constitute the beauty of their object'. The 'art' involves 'the reflection of the Subject upon his own state (of pleasure or displeasure), to the exclusion of precepts and rules', and this task alone, in Kant's view, the literary critic can usefully perform.⁷¹ So let us look in rather more detail from such a perspective at how Dryden brings Ovid to presentation in one episode from the *Metamorphoses*. I have chosen the story of Io from the complete translation of the first book included in *Examen Poeticum* (1693). Elsewhere I have described Ovid's tale as an exercise in getting the story crooked, as Ovid deforms tropes and narrative sequences, while retaining at least some of their traditional resonances.⁷² Indeed what tone or tones might suit the story of a woman who is turned into a cow by her divine lover in an attempt to evade the attentions of his jealous wife (perhaps significantly herself called 'cow-eyed' or 'cow-faced' in Homer) and who, thus transformed, suffers grievously until she is restored to her former shape?

We can see the measure of Dryden's achievement if we compare his translation with two versions from the end of the last century. Kenneth Koch, in his contribution to *After Ovid*, gives us a postmodern, camp Ovid. He offers an archly knowing pastiche of the lively but jogging fourteeners of Arthur Golding's translation of 1567 with which Shakespeare was so enamoured. Koch's gods are comic without grandeur or menace (even the point that they live for ever is reduced to a simple joke):

But Juno knew he lied.
 'Darling, she's such a lovely one, I'd like her for a gift.'
 'Er, well, my dear—' Jove felt some fear. And he had little shrift—
 He didn't want to give his sweetheart to his nagging wife,
 But also didn't want her nagging at him all his life,
 Which was eternal.⁷³

When, for her father, Io writes her name (which is also the Greek for 'alas') in the sand, Koch's exuberant embroidery turns the scene into farce; the passage

⁷¹ Kant (1952) 141. ⁷² Martindale (1993) 57–9.

⁷³ Hofmann and Lasdun (1994) 60.

ends with the kind of deliberately bad comic rhyme favoured by Byron in his satire *Don Juan*:

Weeping, she longs to find some way to make him understand,
 And with her hoof she traces her name IO in the sand.
 (How fortunate that she was not named Thesmophoriazusa
 Or Melancholy Myrtle, or Somatalapoosa—
 For by the time she wrote it out her strength would have been wasted,
 Inachus have gone elsewhere, or the rising tide erased it.)⁷⁴

By contrast, Charles Boer (1989) generally eschews comedy, divine or otherwise, his stated aim being to uncover the ‘harsher, violent subtexts’⁷⁵ of Ovid’s poem. To do this he rejects a smooth-sliding continuity of syntax and metre for the broken phrasing and fragmentation characteristic of Modernism. In his endorsement on the cover (which shows a Haitian god) the poet and translator Guy Davenport compares the result to *The Rite of Spring*, and it is worth recalling that both Stravinsky’s score and Ovid, partly mediated through Sir James Frazer, were two key sources of inspiration for Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. At its best Boer’s version is not without a certain raw power:

about to say this, Mercury sees all
 eyes shut, succumbing to slumber; stops talking
 & deepens sleep with eye-languishing tap of magic
 wand: immediately followed by sickle slice across neck
 of Argus’s nodding head; lopped onto rock, bloody,
 it stains step cliff⁷⁶

But, however legitimately Boer may plead as justification the poem’s underlying ‘savagery’,⁷⁷ the cruelty which seldom lies far from the surface of the poem (on this account), to read the whole episode—let alone the whole poem—in this staccato mode of insistent jerks is an exhausting, and unvaried, experience.

Each of these versions has something pleasurable to offer, but, in my experience of it, Dryden’s generates, in greater measure, ‘aesthetic ideas’. Dryden is able to show that comedy can coexist with other qualities, including a sense of human pain and of the cruel amorality of the powers that control the universe. It is a combination of seemingly incompatible tones and qualities that has often disconcerted, or troubled, readers of the *Metamorphoses*. Dryden’s errant husband Jupiter may be, for our amusement, ‘the almighty lecher’ (832), who, in a sub-heroic touch, ‘transforms his mistress in a trice’ (834), but he can also sustain proper epic treatment (‘involved with vapours’,

⁷⁴ Hofmann and Lasdun (1994) 61.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁵ Boer (1989) p. xiii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

816), and, just before raping Io, he speaks with terrible authority in a powerful triplet:

thy guide is Jove:
 No puny power, but he whose high command
 Is unconfined, who rules the seas and land,
 And tempers thunder in his awful hand. (808–11)

Allusions to admired and resonant passages from Milton and Ben Jonson confirm that profound emotions are at issue, at least on occasion.⁷⁸ Thus the description of Io's grieving father recalls one of the most moving evocations of loss in *Paradise Lost*, one also inspired by Ovid, and again involving a raped daughter and a suffering parent:

For his dear Io, whether strayed or dead
 To him uncertain, doubtful tears he shed;
 He sought her through the world, but sought in vain,
 And, nowhere finding, rather feared her slain. (795–8)

Not that fair field
 Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers
 Herself a fairer flower by gloomy Dis
 Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
 To seek her through the world . . . (PL 4. 268–72)

The Miltonic passage is recalled again, when Inachus discovers and bewails Io's transformation, as he throws his arms about her 'milk-white neck' (appropriate for a beautiful girl as well as a white cow):

And art thou she whom I have sought around
 The world, and have at length so sadly found?
 So found is worse than lost . . . (902–4)

In this lament Inachus employs tropes proper for a dead daughter but given a paradoxical (and potentially humorous) edge by the unusual circumstances of Io's translation. Thus instead of no grandchildren at all, Inachus must contemplate grandchildren who are *calves*:

Unknowing, I prepared thy bridal bed,
 With empty hopes of happy issue fed;
 But now the husband of a herd must be
 Thy mate, and bellowing sons thy progeny. (908–11)

It is difficult to know whether to laugh or cry, or both, or neither, hence the discomfort of some readers. The lines on the dead Argus draw on a powerful

⁷⁸ See the notes in Hammond and Hopkins (2000).

topos about the loss of light in death (in Ovid's Latin *lumen* refers to both 'eye' and 'light'), skewed by its application to an unfeeling monster with a hundred eyes (who may also be, glancingly, an allegory for the starry heavens) but certainly not deprived of all its emotive power. Dryden echoes Jonson's 'Song to Celia', which in turn translates famous lines from Catullus:

Thus Argus lies in pieces, cold and pale,
And all his hundred eyes, with all their light,
Are closed at once, in one perpetual night. (999–1001)

But if once we lose this light,
'Tis, with us, perpetual night. (Jonson, *The Forest*, 5, 7–8)

nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda. (Catullus 5. 5–6)

One passage in particular, describing the lifestyle of Io as a cow under Argus' harsh jurisdiction, illustrates Dryden's capacity to fuse tones not frequently found together:

On leaves of trees and bitter herbs she fed,
Heaven was her canopy, bare earth her bed,
So hardly lodged, and to digest her food
She drank from troubled streams defiled with mud.
Her woeful story fain she would have told
With hands upheld, but had no hand to hold.
Her head to her ungentle keeper bowed,
She strove to speak, she spoke not but she lowed;
Affrighted with the noise, she looked around,
And seemed to inquire the author of the sound. (869–78)

Here we have horror and cruelty as well as humour, the bizarre combined with pathos and sympathy for suffering, and throughout a sprightliness of handling and a delight in paradox and verbal play and complex 'turns'. The phrase 'so hardly lodged' well encapsulates the prevailing doubleness, where 'hardly' means both 'harshly' (as Io is being harshly treated) and 'on the hard ground' (where animals necessarily rest and sleep). Ovid catches both what it might be like to be a dumb animal, and the sheer fear and horror that human beings can experience when they are physically unable to communicate (when coming round from an anaesthetic, say, or in some dream experience⁷⁹). That

⁷⁹ For an analogous allegorization in terms of 'what it means to try to escape from our own self' see Fränkel (1945) 80: 'we also remember the shock we received when, in our adolescence, we were standing before the mirror and for the first time with an adult perception realized how plain and homely we looked to others; or when we were speaking and it happened that our voice sounded wrong and hideous, utterly incapable of conveying what we felt'.

Io when she hears a lowing sound should suppose it comes from elsewhere is a particularly vivid touch. The cruelty is indeed more troubling than it is in Boer because, as a result of the virtuosity of the treatment, the sophisticated and the primitive exist in a tenser conjunction.

Dryden, then, we might say, gives us Ovid's Io as an exercise in the grotesque mode, as theorized later by, among others, the art critic John Ruskin. The grotesque characteristically involves miscegenation and miscegenated bodies, often marked by a strong (and polymorphous) eroticism. In this case we have not only the cow-woman Io, but a hybrid narrative that self-consciously mixes genres (epic, tragedy, bucolic, love elegy). When Mercury, at Jupiter's behest, descends to earth to slay Argus, he steps out of the *Aeneid* into the *Eclogues*, his wand duly made to serve as a shepherd's crook. Dryden handles the discursive slide with relaxed insouciance and in the manner of his translation of the *Eclogues*:

Up hither drive thy goats, and play by me:
This hill has browse for them and shade for thee. (941–2)⁸⁰

Such miscegenation can be experienced as unsettling (since it puts in question fixed categories) or uncanny; it can produce excitement or disgust. According to Ruskin, the grotesque arises 'from healthful but irrational play of the imagination in times of rest', 'from irregular and accidental contemplation of terrible things', or (and for Ruskin this is the noblest form) 'from the confusion of the imagination by the presence of truths which it cannot wholly grasp' (in that sense resembling some versions of the sublime). And he notes that 'in its mocking or playful moods it is apt to jest, sometimes bitterly, with under-current of sternest pathos, sometimes waywardly... with death and sin'.⁸¹ Paul Barlow explains well:

For Ruskin, the grotesque at its truest was a sign of a conscious recognition of the failure of the imagination in the contemplation of a world both more terrible and more complex than can be fully understood. Whereas the sublime recognizes the impossibility of symbolization, marking the collapse of legibility, the grotesque generates a disordered, alien iconography. It reveals a confusion: a disconnection of representation from the real. Its relation to comedy lies in the fact that represented conditions tend to be read as absurd in the face of this knowledge of failure.⁸²

For the unsympathetic the grotesque, which involves 'horror within amusement'⁸³ as well as the surreal or hyper-real, registers as tasteless or silly, and Ovid has indeed often been so dismissed. But Dryden approaches such qualities with undisguised relish.

⁸⁰ For the diction compare e.g. 'jolly swains' (*Pastoral* 7. 1) with 'a country swain' (936) and 'his jolly troop' (937).

⁸¹ Ruskin (1904) 130–1.

⁸² Barlow (1999) 103.

⁸³ Wilson (1999) 151.

Pedagogy is never about the aesthetic alone. But students of literature should not be offered knowledge or morality only, they should be invited to share in fresh possessions of beauty. If I am teaching Ovid in English, Dryden's is the only translation that enables me to bring out many of the points I most want to make, and to communicate the particular quality of pleasure I experience in reading the *Metamorphoses*. This is not, or not only, because Dryden's reception of Ovid has influenced my own, nor is it simply because Dryden (as interpreted by me) 'has Ovid right' (although this is how I may experience the matter). Rather there are innumerable factors in the reception, not all of which can be brought to consciousness, including a powerfully enabling critical discourse of 'postmodern' criticism centrally concerned with the self-conscious play of language, which help me to find the Ovid-in-Dryden and Dryden-in-Ovid that I do. In this association neither Ovid nor Dryden is simply inert, or already fully known; rather the relationship is reciprocal, as each helps to disclose the other. The Kantian 'judgement of taste' does not mean that aesthetic experience is unmediated. And the mediations that we find most powerful may be said to have (for us) classic status.

On the aesthetic model I am advancing, Dryden's Ovid might be deemed a classic text, if, standing alone, it were judged to display outstanding aesthetic quality, for example along the lines I have sketched above. It might further be regarded as a classic translation, if, when set alongside the Latin text of Ovid, it were to prompt a lively play of the mental faculties of the reader, giving her an enriched experience of Ovid (something much less likely to happen with a purely functional translation such as a Loeb). As we have seen, the aesthetic welcomes proliferation; after Dryden's translation (say) you have (potentially) two classics instead of one. It is often assumed that a translation primarily serves to reinforce an original; it may give that original greater power, but it depends on its authority. But within the aesthetic, there is no problem in letting the various works stand free. For example, the story of Cupid and Psyche works one way in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, differently when translated by Pater in his novel *Marius the Epicurean*—there is no requirement for one to be dependent on the other. A functional or instrumental translation, including most of those used in Classical Civilization courses today, can thus be figured as distinct from an aesthetic translation, a translation for its own sake. An analysis attentive only to the ideological may fail to differentiate the two, assigning to all translations a definite end. But it was in no such spirit, but to release in dialogue with them a free play of his mental powers, a free play with unpredicted and unpredictable outcomes, that Dryden turned to Ovid and to the other ancient authors he so loved.

CONCLUSION: TRANSLATION AND CHANGE;
OVID'S DRYDEN

The last of the translations from Ovid in the *Fables*, 'Of the Pythagorean Philosophy', can easily be read as Dryden's final thoughts on the character of the world as he had experienced it throughout a long and varied career.⁸⁴ Dryden, in his headnote, describes 'the moral and natural philosophy of Pythagoras' as 'the most learned and beautiful parts of the whole *Metamorphoses*'. And he treats the episode as an important and serious piece of philosophical poetry (in that sense, like Lucretius). Modern scholars have not, on the whole, agreed with him, either disparaging it or treating it as a parody of such poetry. But Dryden's response, like Spenser's before him, was at one with the view of most readers in the Middle Ages and Renaissance whose views are documented. So perhaps Dryden, here at his very finest, may be our guide to a more generous reading. Dryden treats Ovidian metamorphosis as a profound engagement with change in all its manifestations, change in the natural kingdom, change in human societies and nations, change in individuals, change as constituting the overriding character of our sublunary world, which we must therefore relish rather than fear:

Then to be born is to begin to be
Some other thing we were not formerly;
And what we call to die is not to appear
Or be the thing that formerly we were.
Those very elements which we partake
Alive, when dead, some other bodies make,
Translated grow, have sense, or can discourse—
But death on deathless substance has no force. (390–7)

As David Hopkins has noted, 'elements' and 'partake' may hint at the Eucharist, suggesting that the Catholic poet is indeed unusually in earnest.⁸⁵ The word 'translated' encourages a self-reflexive ('Ovidian') reading; translation shares the paradoxical combination of sameness-in-difference and difference-in-sameness that characterizes Ovidian change in general. 'Translated' translates, metaphrastically, the Latin *translata* from *transferre*. The word can signify, as the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* records, as well as 'carry over into another form' (the obvious meaning in Ovid), 'to translate into another language', 'to apply words in a figurative sense', or 'to express by metaphor'

⁸⁴ For this translation see Reverand (1988) 218–19; Hopkins (2001); Tomlinson (2003) 101–3; Hopkins (2004) 66–7, 99–102.

⁸⁵ Hopkins (2001) 151.

(Greek, of course, for ‘carry over’). But does it do so in this passage of Ovid (a writer who certainly relishes the slide of the signifier), where translation in this sense is not obviously at issue? Does *translata*, then, mean the same as ‘translated’, or is it different? Of all poems the *Metamorphoses* encourages such questioning; and, in thus questioning stability, seems to have held no terrors for Dryden, whose Ovidian versions convey rather, as here, a kind of fierce joy. According to Frank Kermode, ‘identity in change’ is precisely the mark of the classic: ‘*King Lear*, underlying a thousand dispositions, subsists in change, prevails, by being patient of interpretation.’⁸⁶ Certainly, for this reader at least, Dryden’s Ovid (or should that be Ovid’s Dryden?) can be said to have the capacity to subsist in change, to prevail. And, to that extent, within the House Beautiful, this translation may be called a classic.

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⁸⁶ Kermode (1975) 16, 134.

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Between Homage and Critique: Coetzee, Translation, and the Classic

Johan Geertsema

If, as Samuel Weber puts it, '[the] history of translation is marked by a tension between two inseparable and yet incompatible motifs: fidelity and betrayal',¹ then one consequence is that the nature of the relation between original and translation is split. On the one hand there is the demand for fidelity to the original; on the other there is the necessity of the betrayal by the translation of that demand for fidelity. In the case of the relation between translation and 'the classic' things get even more complicated. Given the special status of the classic text, its (albeit contested) cultural authority, how can the translation do justice to the original? If translation is necessarily reductive, how can the translation not reduce the classic and thereby betray it? Can a classic text be translated adequately?

There is a sense, however, in which issues of fidelity and betrayal might be beside the point when one considers the question of the relation between translation and the classic. If the classic is 'what survives', as the novelist and critic J. M. Coetzee defines it,² then this suggests that the classic needs translation quite regardless of whether translation can do justice to it. For, to be classic, the survival of the text would be measured by its ability to speak 'from long ago and far away',³ and this would depend to a significant extent on the ability of translation to carry it across time and space. The question would then become how the classic might manage without translation: could a text even *be* classic without being translated?

One way of approaching questions concerning the relation between translation and the classic is to say that they entail the question of the relation between translation and original, since the classic text is of necessity an original. Without wishing to pre-empt my investigation in this chapter of how Coetzee understands the relation between translation and the classic, and though the term 'classic' is notoriously resistant to definition, it is yet possible

¹ Weber (2005) 66.

² Coetzee (2001) 16.

³ Coetzee (1992) 250.

to establish a somewhat provisional association between the classic and the original, or source text, of a translation, and to underscore its originary and canonical status. What distinguishes the classic from other originals is precisely its status, which is elevated and patrician, and which carries cultural weight and cultural capital. The classic is inextricably related to questions of power, and this power hints at its imperial identity.⁴ The originary status of a text is a factor that is central in establishing it as a classic and is partly what makes it difficult to conceptualize both what a classic is and how it relates to translation. The reason for this is twofold: while the classic is an original rather than a translation, it yet is also subject to translation. To say that the classic text is an original cannot in any simple way mean that the classic somehow ‘precedes’ the translation—there is a very real sense in which the classic is brought into being by translation, since the translation is what makes it accessible for reading in the language into which it is translated, and it is after all the translation of the classic rather than the classic text ‘itself’ that is read in the target language. There is thus a sense in which translation not only precedes the classic, but in fact ironically supplants it in transplanting it into a new context, as Walter Benjamin might say.⁵

One could push this further and argue that, in the process of disseminating the classic-as-original by means of translation, the classic is brought into movement by this process and is thereby destabilized and, indeed, ‘de-canonized, questioned in a way which undoes its claim to canonical authority’, as Paul de Man puts it.⁶ The peculiar temporality involved in the relation between the classic-as-original and translation suggests that translation is not merely the handmaiden of the classic. Moreover, as de Man’s phrase implies, translation might be viewed as standing in a critical relation to the classic in ‘questioning’ and ‘undoing’ it. This set of peculiarities implicit in the temporality of translation are, I think, central to understanding the relation between translation and the classic, not least as it is adumbrated by Coetzee.⁷ Since it provides

⁴ For a useful taxonomy that pays attention to the problematic status of the classic as original, and a discussion of how unsatisfactory such taxonomies and anatomies of the classical are, see Porter (2006) 13–19. Frank Kermode (1975) 25 shows that the ‘doctrine or myth of the *imperium sine fine* . . . underlies Eliot’s account of the classic’. Kermode’s is an invaluable study of the imperial identity of the classic, in particular as formulated by T. S. Eliot, a figure central to Coetzee’s consideration of the classic.

⁵ Benjamin (1977) 56; (1999) 76.

⁶ de Man (1986) 83.

⁷ Arguing for what he calls ‘the relative autonomy of translation’, Lawrence Venuti (2005) 800, elaborates on the temporality of translation as a crucial component of this relative autonomy. Venuti, *ibid.* 805–6, shows that translations from different historical moments follow different discursive strategies, and that ‘the historical markers of the translations have no impact on their accuracy . . . [They] offer nothing more than a representation of the foreign text that varies according to historical developments in the translating language and culture.’ While I

us with a provocative, extended meditation on questions involving both translation and the classic, reflecting on the relation between them also has the potential, conversely, of illuminating Coetzee's work.

In the first place, canonical texts feature prominently in Coetzee's fiction. Thus, for instance, Hesiod, Virgil, Dante, and Thucydides are some of the classics that are evoked in *Age of Iron*,⁸ while, respectively, Kafka and Byron would be only the most obvious points of reference in *Life and Times of Michael K*⁹ and *Disgrace*.¹⁰ Often he appears to deconstruct classics, as for instance in his refunctioning of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in *Foe*.¹¹ Moreover, Coetzee has written an important essay, 'What Is a Classic?: A Lecture', as well as a number of shorter essays on texts that may be deemed 'classics', many of them collected in *Stranger Shores*¹²—the book in which 'What Is a Classic?' appears as an introductory essay of sorts.¹³ In 'What Is a Classic?' Coetzee quite explicitly positions himself relative to T. S. Eliot, both on a formal and a thematic level. Coetzee's title evokes that of Eliot's own essay 'What Is a Classic?'¹⁴ and the first part is a reading of Eliot's essay in which Coetzee situates himself as a kind of intellectual successor to Eliot. This relation, however, is anything but uncomplicated; Coetzee's ambivalent identification with Eliot involves what I shall argue is an element of respectful parody. Despite their self-evident cultural capital—by 1944 Eliot, as Coetzee puts it, 'could be said to dominate English letters';¹⁵ by 2001, when Coetzee's essay appeared in *Stranger Shores*, he had won the Booker Prize twice and was about to win the Nobel Prize (2003)—the Capetonian Coetzee shares with his Southern ancestor a marginality relative to the cultural metropolis of Europe. His essay constitutes a self-critical examination and recuperation of his relationship to 'the classic' from the vantage point of his complex Euro-African identity.¹⁶

would subscribe to this notion of 'relative autonomy', specifically with regard to the historicity of translation, the temporality of translation that I am elaborating here goes further. Rather than being 'a derivative or second-order form of creation', as Venuti, *ibid.* 801, puts it, the act of translation is one of the conditions of possibility of the classic as original. Translation brings the original foreign text into being in the target language; when this text is a 'classic', translation effects, or helps effect, its classic status.

⁸ Coetzee (1990).

⁹ Coetzee (1985).

¹⁰ Coetzee (1999).

¹¹ Coetzee (1986). For an insightful consideration of canonicity with reference to Coetzee's writing in general, focusing specifically on *Foe*, see Attridge (2004) 65–90.

¹² Coetzee (2001).

¹³ The lecture was delivered in 1991 and first published in 1993 in the South African journal *Current Writing*, as Coetzee (2001) p. v points out.

¹⁴ Eliot (1975).

¹⁵ Coetzee (2001) 1.

¹⁶ Whether or not Coetzee's investment of the classic in his own African identity has been successful is an open question, one which must remain suspended, given his recent emigration, subsequent to the publication of the essay, to Australia.

In addition, translation informs Coetzee's work to a significant extent. Though he does not refer explicitly to translation in 'What Is a Classic?', it nonetheless is implicit in the dialectic of the provincial and metropolitan that he traces. A central concern of the essay is the process whereby the American Eliot uses the category of the classic to 'English' himself, so that the provincial is translated into the metropolitan by means of the cultural capital of the classic. Looking beyond the essay, Coetzee is of course an accomplished translator; most recently, *Landscape with Rowers*¹⁷ presents modernist poetry from the Netherlands for an English audience. I will in the last part of this chapter return to one of the translations from the volume, that of Gerrit Achterberg's 'Ballade van de gasfitter',¹⁸ as well as to an essay in which Coetzee analyses both this sonnet sequence and his translation of it.¹⁹ Finally, it should be mentioned that the problem of language, its translatability and status—specifically, the adequacy of English to engage with African reality—is figured explicitly in Coetzee's fiction, perhaps most strikingly in *Disgrace*.²⁰

Given the importance of the categories of translation and the classic for Coetzee's work, the fact that he has written extensively on both, and his performance of the role of translator, not to mention the classical status of his own work, my aim in this chapter is to begin to consider the question of what the relation between translation and the classic might in Coetzee's view be, especially since he has not himself spelt it out. For Coetzee, I argue, the complex relation between translation and the classic involves both homage and critique. Critique of the classic is an activity that is a *sine qua non* for establishing it as a classic, and critique therefore turns out to be a form of homage to the classic, a way of paying respect to it; translation is one significant form that such critique as homage takes. In order to make this argument, I will focus first on Coetzee's essay on the classic and then consider his approach to translation in order, finally, to relate them to each other.

* * *

'What, if anything, is left of the classic after the classic has been historicized, that may still claim to speak across the ages?'²¹ This is one of the central

¹⁷ Coetzee (2004). ¹⁸ Achterberg (2004a) [1953].

¹⁹ Coetzee (1992) 69–90. A roughly contemporaneous essay, with the title 'Homage' (1993) 5–7, considers authors who have influenced Coetzee, as well as translations of them. In addition to further scattered comments on translation throughout much of his work, Coetzee has more recently written a number of shorter essays for the *New York Review of Books* in which he considers translations of, among others, Rilke (Coetzee 2001) 60–73, Kafka (ibid.) 74–87, and Borges (ibid.) 139–50. See also the essays in the recent collection *Inner Workings* (2007).

²⁰ According to Wicomb (2002) 215, 209, *Disgrace* 'could be seen to explore the relationship between the original and the translated, between transition and translation'. More specifically, she considers this novel to be 'a text that struggles with translation as concept-metaphor for the postapartheid condition'.

²¹ Coetzee (2001) 10.

questions addressed by Coetzee in the essay ‘What Is a Classic?’. If the classic possesses the ability, which is the possibility Coetzee investigates, to ‘speak across the ages’, as Virgil does from ancient Rome or Bach from eighteenth-century Germany, then this suggests that there is a sense in which the classic transcends history. Not only would it have relevance for the time of its coming into being, but that relevance, or a version of it, would persist ‘across the ages’ and extend to those who come after it. That is, the classic might be said to aspire to transcend history. But if this is the case, what then remains of the classic once one recognizes that it is a function of history, that it is ‘historically constituted . . . by identifiable historical forces and within a specific historical context’?²²

Coetzee identifies here a tension within the category of the classic as a phenomenon that is historical in that it is, like any other phenomenon, of a particular historical moment. Yet, at the same time this phenomenon appears to transcend the historical moment in its ability to move beyond it, to persist, to remain alive in being transported to other, later periods of history. In other words, the classic paradoxically appears to be defined in terms of its ability to cancel what defines it, namely history. If the classic appears timeless, what happens to it if time is brought back to it? Simply put, if the classic is shown *not* to be timeless, but of its time, how can it still be classic? If, for instance, we come to see the classic as ‘the masked expression of a material interest’²³ and therefore as a function of historical and, indeed, ideological, forces, how can we still think of it as somehow ‘beyond’ history? Even more urgently, might the ideological unmasking of the classic not expose it as ideology itself, as the operation of ideology *par excellence*? For this would seem to be the case if ideology is understood as involving a denial of history: as a process of presenting the contingent as natural, as transmogrifying historical processes so as to make them appear eternal.²⁴ It is just this kind of historicizing activity in which Coetzee engages in the essay, and therefore we too need to historicize his historicization. I will do so by mimicking the opening of his essay, since this will help us see how Coetzee in it performs a respectful critique of his

²² Coetzee (2001) 10.

²³ *Ibid.* 9.

²⁴ As Althusser (2001), 107, famously puts it, ‘ideology has no history’. One of the things he means by this is that it cannot strictly speaking have a history since it operates precisely in order to occult the historical. Ideology and ideological state apparatuses are, from this perspective, effective precisely by being able to present historical contingency, for instance the free market or American hegemony, as the ‘natural’ and therefore unquestioned state of affairs. In this sense, ideology involves the suppression of difference and the denial of contestation: of course, there is anything but consensus today that the free market is the natural state of affairs, but ideology makes it appear commonsensical. For a recent view of the classical as an instance of ideology in action, see Porter (2006), 12: ‘the allures of classicism just are an ideological pleasure’.

subject matter, one in which I hope to engage in turn. It is a parodic *modus operandi*, if one understands parody as textual engagement by a hypertext with a hypotext that of necessity involves not merely critique but, wittingly or not, homage towards that hypotext.²⁵ Significantly, Coetzee himself appears to be parodying Eliot's text in so self-consciously repeating it and, more particularly, in textual details such as his reference in the opening paragraph to Eliot's 'best British manner'.²⁶

In the summer of 1991, as representatives of the South African apartheid state and members of various opposition groupings (which had just more than a year earlier been unbanned by the regime) were preparing to start negotiations concerning a future beyond apartheid, J. M. Coetzee, aged 51, gave the keynote address at a conference in Graz, Austria. In his lecture Coetzee does not mention these dramatic circumstances at all, instead reflecting on the apparently remote 'question of the classic'.²⁷ He starts off by considering T. S. Eliot's lecture 'What Is a Classic?', in which Eliot attempts to respond to this question with reference, in particular, to Virgil and Dante.²⁸ Coetzee points out that, although delivered to the Virgil Society in 1944 in London, at the height of the Second World War, 'Eliot does not mention wartime circumstances',²⁹ except by referring obliquely to "'accidents of the present time" that had made it difficult . . . to prepare the lecture'. Eliot might appear to be more than a little ahistorical in largely ignoring the war, and also in not reflecting 'on the fact of his own Americanness, or at least his American origins',³⁰ something which 'struck' Coetzee as he reread Eliot's essay. But Coetzee, right at the start of his own essay, which precisely in invoking the historical circumstances to which he says Eliot barely refers constitutes a historicization of Eliot's text, highlights how the latter must be understood as thoroughly historical: Coetzee understands the fact that Eliot is largely ignoring the 'accidents of the present time' as 'a way of reminding his auditors that there is a perspective in which the war is only a hiccup, however massive, in the life of Europe'.³¹

²⁵ See Hutcheon (2000) 26: '[in] imitating, even with critical difference, parody reinforces' the text being parodied. The paradox is that the parodic hypertext tends to resuscitate the hypotext which it criticizes through imitating it differently. The terms 'hypotext' and 'hypertext' derive from Gérard Genette, and are deployed by some theorists of parody to distinguish between the text being parodied (the hypotext) and the text engaging in parody by imitating it (the hypertext). See Hutcheon (2000) 21, 30.

²⁶ Coetzee (2001) 1.

²⁷ Ibid. 9.

²⁸ Eliot (1975) 115–31. For an exemplary and influential reading of Eliot's lecture, see especially Kermode (1975) 15–45.

²⁹ Coetzee (2001) 1.

³⁰ Ibid. 2.

³¹ Ibid. 1.

Already here, in his first paragraph, Coetzee is emphasizing the ineluctable necessity of history: even to be ahistorical, even to ignore history, is already a profoundly historical act. In Eliot's case, it is in his interest to ignore history since he is using the lecture first and foremost as part of his attempt 'to *make* a new identity':³² Eliot is using the transcendent nature of the classic, as he understands it, to help him "'become" English',³³ as Coetzee puts it, claiming 'a European and *Roman* identity under which [Eliot's] London identity, English identity, and Anglo-American identity were subsumed and transcended'.³⁴ In other words, Coetzee sees a process of translation at work in Eliot's lecture: Eliot is being Englished, and this is occurring through Eliot's laying claim to Virgil as an antecedent of a contemporary European identity of which he as much as his auditors partake.

While Coetzee is engaging in historicizing Eliot, it is striking that Coetzee *himself* does not at all refer to the present time, and certainly not to the extraordinary political convulsions undergone by his native South Africa in 1991 at the very moment he was reading his lecture. The closest he comes to a contemporary reference is the self-reflexive observation that he finds himself 'on a platform in Europe addressing a cosmopolitan audience on Bach, T. S. Eliot, and the question of the classic'.³⁵ An important corollary of his analysis of Eliot's lecture is that Coetzee's engagement with history, even though (like Eliot's) it does not directly engage its historical moment, is anything but ahistorical here. Indeed, like Eliot, Coetzee arguably takes a longer view of history and sees those convulsions as 'only a hiccup, however massive, in the life'³⁶ of South Africa.

If Eliot uses the classic to help 'make a new identity' for himself in Europe, might one say that Coetzee is doing something similar in Africa? For if Coetzee, like Eliot, refuses to refer to the present historical conjuncture, he nevertheless offers, unlike Eliot, a surprisingly personal reflection on his own colonial South African identity in the second section of the essay.³⁷ Here he proceeds to consider his own first experience of the 'impact of *the classic*'³⁸ as a 15 year old hearing Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* in Cape Town. He does so in terms of two alternative readings of Eliot's enterprise, that of constructing a new identity, a process that is analogous to a translation and that occurs

³² Coetzee (2001) 6; Coetzee's italics.

³³ Ibid. 2.

³⁴ Ibid. 3; Coetzee's italics.

³⁵ Ibid. 9.

³⁶ Ibid. 1.

³⁷ This is particularly unexpected given Coetzee's notorious reticence concerning his private life as for instance reflected in his antipathy towards interviews. As Coetzee says (1992) 65: 'I don't regard myself as a public figure, a figure in the public domain. I dislike the violation of propriety, to say nothing of the violation of private space, that occurs in the typical interview.' An exception is clearly here constituted by David Attwell, Coetzee's interviewer in *Doubling the Point*.

³⁸ Coetzee (2001) 9; his italics.

explicitly with reference to the classic as a transcendent category that informs the transcendental epiphanies not only of Eliot's work but of his life. The first of these readings Coetzee calls 'broadly sympathetic': it 'would take seriously the call from Virgil that seems to come to Eliot from across the centuries'.³⁹ Coetzee designates this a 'transcendental-poetic' reading.⁴⁰ A second, alternative reading is 'broadly unsympathetic': it would understand Eliot's approach to the classic as simply constituting an investment in his identity and cultural authority, and thereby as 'an attempt to give a certain historical backing to [his] radically conservative program for Europe',⁴¹ where the apparently historically transcendent status of the classic would suggest a cultural continuity between the Rome of Virgil, that of Dante, and Eliot's Britain, and would thereby afford a suprahistorical continuity to the British nation and to Anglo-Catholicism. This second reading Coetzee designates 'sociocultural'.⁴²

Coetzee then uses these two readings of Eliot to interrogate his own encounter with the classic, asking whether 'the experience [was] what I understood it to be—a disinterested and in a sense impersonal aesthetic experience—or was it really the masked expression of a material interest?'.⁴³ By the former he means the experience he thought he had had as a child, of being spoken to by Bach 'across the ages, across the seas'; by the latter, on the other hand, he means quite specifically to establish whether what the moment meant was 'that I was symbolically electing high European culture'. The parallels between Coetzee and Eliot, and the alternative ways in which one might read their respective encounters with the classic, are clear. But what is Coetzee's answer to this question as to the significance of his encounter with the classic? Here we should consider his view of history as a force that cannot be conceptualized and therefore represented adequately. In response to an interviewer's comment concerning the place of history in his fiction, Coetzee states that '[history] may be, as you call it, a process for representation, but to me it feels more like a *force* for representation, and in that sense, yes, it is unrepresentable'.⁴⁴ This suggests that, though history is not in and of itself textual, any engagement with it must be textual. Coetzee's statement is reminiscent of Fredric Jameson's influential formulation: as he puts it, 'history... is *not* a text, for it is fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational; what can be added, however, is the proviso that history is inaccessible to us except in textual form'.⁴⁵ The brute fact of history, the raw force that it enacts, the actuality of what happened, cannot be represented but is, nonetheless, only accessible through the mediation of textual form, that is, through

³⁹ Ibid. 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 8.

⁴¹ Ibid. 5.

⁴² Ibid. 7.

⁴³ Ibid. 9.

⁴⁴ Coetzee (1992) 67; his italics.

⁴⁵ Jameson (1981) 82; his italics.

historiography as the writing-of-history. Therefore engaging with history must have less to do with an attempt at verisimilitude so as to ‘reflect’ reality and the historical forces acting upon it than with what Coetzee calls ‘a historicizing consciousness’, that is, ‘the distancing effect of reflexivity [and] textualization.’⁴⁶

Given Coetzee’s self-aware approach to history as brute, blind force, his own attempt to make sense of the historical force of the classic upon him, a force that paradoxically would seem to suspend history itself since as classic it precisely speaks *across* time, might be expected to lead him to the second answer (namely, that it is ‘really the masked expression of a material interest’). ‘If the notion of the classic as the timeless is undermined’⁴⁷ in the process of historicizing both it and one’s encounter with it, and one should remember that in the essay Coetzee is precisely engaging in just such historicizing, then he cannot but, so it would seem, answer in the affirmative when he asks whether ‘being spoken to across the ages [is] a notion that we can entertain today only in bad faith’, since such a ‘fully historical’ account of the classic not only renders it *historical* and therefore anything but timeless, but moreover renders it subject to the material interests that are the stuff of history once we see it as material. Yet Coetzee’s answer is ‘No’;⁴⁸ even though he has been historicizing the classic, and even though it now must therefore appear a dubious category that involves the sordidness of material interest as expressed in cultural prestige, Coetzee is not willing to give up the classic, but instead seeks to redefine it.

Coetzee’s redefinition of the classic positions its identity as not *essential*, but *relational*. As he puts it in the self-reflective mode with which he is consistently approaching the question of the classic in the essay, ‘it is of the essence of this skeptical questioning that the term *Bach* should stand simply as a counter for European high culture, that Bach or *Bach* should have no value in himself or itself—that the notion of “value in itself” should in fact be the object of skeptical interrogation.’⁴⁹ The sceptical interrogation of the classic implies that Bach can have no value independently but is merely an entity that acts as an object or person that counts as, or attests to, something else, namely ‘European high culture’, an entity that might or indeed might not be valued, since (in another sense of the word ‘counter’) it might just be the opposite of that culture, as Bach was for at least part of history, when he was neglected, if not forgotten. Either way, value would be displaced *outside* Bach and would be lodged elsewhere. Coetzee therefore can express the hope that, ‘[by] not invoking any idealist justification of “value in itself” or trying to isolate some

⁴⁶ Coetzee (1992) 62.

⁴⁷ Coetzee (2001) 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 15; Coetzee’s italics.

quality, some essence of the classic, held in common by works that survive the process of testing . . . I have allowed the terms *Bach, the classic* to emerge with a value of their own.⁵⁰ This value is then not lodged *in* the terms; they have no *essential* value of their own. On the contrary, their value is subject to whether they ‘survive the process of testing’ of Bach by musicians that Coetzee describes in the final section of the essay, which is to say in the end that their value is attached to them by people who stand in *relation* to them, ‘by hundreds of thousands of fellow human beings’ to whom the classic Bach matters.⁵¹

Defining the value of the classic relationally, in terms of the criterion of the survival of testing, leads Coetzee, finally, to relate this value to criticism:

So we arrive at a certain paradox. The classic defines itself by surviving. Therefore the interrogation of the classic, no matter how hostile, is part of the history of the classic, inevitable and even to be welcomed. For as long as the classic needs to be protected from attack, it can never prove itself classic.

One might even venture further along this road to say that the function of criticism is defined by the classic: criticism is that which is duty-bound to interrogate the classic. Thus the fear that the classic will not survive the decentering acts of criticism may be turned on its head: rather than being the foe of the classic, criticism, and indeed criticism of the most skeptical kind, may be what the classic uses to define itself and ensure its survival. Criticism may in that sense be one of the instruments of the cunning of history.⁵²

What exactly does Coetzee mean by ‘criticism’? The fact that he uses a metaphoric of war, as evident from ‘hostile’, ‘attack’, ‘fear’, and ‘foe’, suggests that criticism is here something allied, as its etymology would suggest, to *crisis*. This is further confirmed by the fact that Coetzee associates the ‘criticism’ which the classic ‘survives’ with the ‘barbarian’, with ‘the assault of barbarism’. The passage follows a reference to the work of the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert; as it happens, Coetzee wrote an essay⁵³ on Herbert that was first published in 1991, the same year he delivered the lecture ‘What Is a Classic?’. In the essay on Herbert Coetzee closely considers the poet’s experience of communist censorship and its relation to his engagement, in his poetry, with the classic. The paradox that Coetzee discovers in Herbert is that the latter’s engagement with the classic as category is generated by the barbarism of the censor. Coetzee shows that this is the case not merely, or even at all, in the sense that Herbert engages with the classic so as to produce an allegorical rather than literal engagement with totalitarian Polish reality in order to sidestep the censor who, in trying to abstract meaning from texts and

⁵⁰ Ibid. 15–16.

⁵¹ Ibid. 16.

⁵² Ibid. 16.

⁵³ Coetzee (1996) 147–62.

pin it down becomes a figure for the 'absolutist reader' who seeks to interpret the poem 'in order to know what it *really* means, to know its truth'.⁵⁴ In fact, as Coetzee explains, such 'second-order writing (metaphor, allegory)' that lends itself to interpretation is precisely what does not apply to much of Herbert's writing, in that it exhibits 'resistances . . . to being given a reading at all'. Herbert might engage with the classic because of the absolutist figure of the censor, but he does so not to sidestep the censor through *allegory* for the reason that the censor would have little difficulty in fixing its meaning as allegory.⁵⁵ Rather, Herbert's engagement with the classic is a way of resisting absolutism by historicizing his position as well as that of the censor, of resisting 'the spirit of the barbarian (embodied in such people as Stalin), which is pretty much the same thing as history-the-unrepresentable'.⁵⁶

To this extent, Coetzee sees Herbert as viewing the humanizing power of the classic as a resistance to critical hostility, which is the crisis of barbarism as the inhuman. But, of course, part of the point of Coetzee's reading of Herbert is that had it not been for the forces of history and its barbarism, Herbert may not have turned to the classic at all. The censor as the embodiment of the assault on the human paradoxically drives the turn to the classic, and (as Coetzee notes) the classic persists and survives the absolutist figure who turns out to have been a mere historical contingency after all, as evident from 'the events of 1989'⁵⁷ when the Polish censor was relegated to the ash heap of history with the collapse of communism across Europe. Coetzee is thus articulating a strange logic whereby the classic is strengthened by what would weaken it, and is proven by what would destroy it, namely criticism as hostility. This hostility of criticism, whether it is the barbarism of the Stalinist censor or the benevolent testing of the musician, turns out to be hospitality in that such hostility to the classic not only opens up but even, in a sense (as with Bach or Herbert), gives rise to the classic.

Now, the logic Coetzee is articulating with respect to criticism and the classic is directly analogous to that which is involved in the case of the original and translation. This appears especially clearly in Benjamin's consideration of translation (*Übersetzung*) in terms of a logic of *Überleben* and *Fortleben*.⁵⁸ As *Überleben*,

⁵⁴ Coetzee (1996) 161 his italics.

⁵⁵ For a reading that refuses to approach Coetzee's writing as allegorical for similar reasons, see Attridge (2004) 32–64.

⁵⁶ Coetzee (1992) 67.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Benjamin (1977) 51–2. On *Überleben*, see de Man (1986) 85. His essay on Benjamin remains, despite some strong criticism (or even, in terms of the logic I am elaborating here, because of it), a valuable resource. For criticism that takes de Man to task for what she thinks is his misreading of Benjamin, see Bannett (1993), esp. 582–4. For more on sur-vival, the living beyond, with reference to translation, see Derrida (1985).

in the sense of a living-beyond, translation supplants the original and lives in its stead. Just as in Coetzee's argument criticism, even and in particular *hostile* criticism, serves not only to strengthen the classic but even actually to bring it into being, so translation in Benjamin's argument is an assault on the original that, ironically, helps it survive. In that the translation comes from the afterlife of the original, it necessarily assumes the death of the original. Even more radically, we might understand the translation that lives in the place of the original as thereby killing that original, which it has displaced. Yet in doing so, the translation gives the original new life and is an instrument in its continued life, its *Fortleben*.⁵⁹ Hostility links criticism to the classic, translation to the original, and thereby criticism to translation. In terms of the logics separately articulated by Coetzee and by Benjamin, it would in principle be possible to define translation as criticism, and it remains for us finally to elaborate on how Coetzee's understanding of the identity and value of the classic, as relational rather than essential, is related to translation. To this end I turn to a brief discussion of Coetzee's translation of Gerrit Achterberg's dense sonnet sequence 'Ballade van de gasfitter'.⁶⁰ In the fourteen sonnets that make up this enigmatic sequence an I is looking for, but cannot find, a You. The I disguises himself as a gasfitter to pursue and find, though unsuccessfully, the You. After this unsuccessful attempt to find the other, he grows old and dies.⁶¹

Coetzee presents the sonnets and his translation of it on facing pages, which immediately invites the reader to pay attention not only to the translation itself, but to the process of translation, and makes for an especially fascinating study when read with his earlier essay on the original and his translation of it to which I have already referred. In this essay Coetzee explains that all literary translation, including his own, is compromised since it constitutes an act of reading and is therefore itself 'part of the work of criticism'.⁶² Literary texts present translators:

with problems for which the perfect solution is impossible and for which partial solutions constitute critical acts. . . . [Faced] with the impossibility of 'full' translation, that is, a mapping of all significations that may inhere in the original, translators make verbal choices in accordance with their conception of the whole. . . . [Just] like the process of translation, reading is a process of constructing a whole for oneself out of the datum of the printed text, of constructing one's own version of the poem. In a clear sense, all reading is translation, just as all translation is criticism.⁶³

⁵⁹ Benjamin (1977) 52.

⁶⁰ Achterberg (2004a) 2–28; (2004b) 3–29.

⁶¹ A first version of this translation was published in *PMLA* 92 (1977). See Coetzee (1992) 433. For a paraphrase of the sonnet sequence, see *ibid.* 69.

⁶² Coetzee (1992) 88.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 89–90.

As is evident from this passage, Coetzee sees translation as criticism because it is partial in that it involves a process of selection that is typical of critical reading. In Coetzee's definition of translation we should read *criticism* not only in the sense of *critical reading* that Coetzee most obviously means, but also (as in the essay on the classic) as denoting a crisis, a hostility implicit in its necessary partiality. Coetzee argues that 'the central symbolism of the poem [is] the symbolism of gas and the hole';⁶⁴ and one of the choices he makes in his translation of Achterberg's poem is, rightly, to render the Dutch *gas* as the English *gas*. His discussion of the various interpretative possibilities of *gas* in the poem is illuminating, especially in highlighting the untranslatability of the verb *dichten*, which means both 'to seal' a hole and 'to compose poetry',⁶⁵ and in pointing out that the entire poem is constructed on this pun which cannot be adequately rendered in English, so that the 'gasfitter', in sealing holes, becomes a figure for the poet. He further highlights what he calls the 'notorious homophonic sequence *whole-hole-holy*' which is absent from Dutch, but which is carried into his translation, as in sonnet 9: 'Hier zit geen gas. God is het gat. . . .' | 'There is no gas here. God is the hole. . . .'⁶⁶ This translation, while suggesting God's absence or death, also helps the reader associate God, the holy, with the whole—something not evident in the original. At the same time, the translations 'gas' and 'hole' do not render the link between 'gas', 'gat', and 'God', which Coetzee himself notes, calling it a 'phantom phonetic mutation'. According to Coetzee, *gas* can be translated symbolically in two ways: as spirit, the ghostly, and (via Sartre) as the intangible hole of nothingness that signifies consciousness.⁶⁷ Additionally, however, the Dutch *gas*, though it derives from the Greek *χάος*, stands in a homophonic relation with the word for *guest*, namely *gast*, in turn related to among others the English *ghost*, *host*, and its numerous cognates, a relationship which must be even more striking to Coetzee as someone intimately familiar with the Afrikaans language in which *gas* does mean both *gas* and *guest*. The Dutch *gas* hosts the ghostly sound of *gast* and is thereby related in an untranslatable way to this word. In translating *gas* as *gas*, Coetzee cannot but betray the original that he is translating, since his translation, too, is subject to the gap between what Benjamin calls 'das Gemeinte' and 'die Art des Meinens'.⁶⁸ As Philip E. Lewis points out, the translator is 'confronted with the impossibility of importing signifiers and their associative chains from one language to another [and] the demand is for fidelity to much

⁶⁴ Coetzee (1992) 70. ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 73–5.

⁶⁶ Achterberg (2004a) 18/(2004b) 19. ⁶⁷ Coetzee (1992) 82, 77, 73–4.

⁶⁸ Benjamin (1977) 55. See de Man (1986) 86–7, for a discussion of this distinction, as well as of what he considers the problematic translation of it as 'intended object' and 'mode of intention'.

more than semantic substance [but] to the modalities of expression and to rhetorical strategies.⁶⁹ This is something of which Coetzee, of course, is well aware, as we have seen him note, and to which he refers explicitly in his chapter in this volume: he notes '[the] necessary imperfection of translation . . . brought about in the first place by the incapacity of any given target language to supply for each single word in the source language a corresponding single word that would cover, precisely and without overlap, the denotation of the original and its major connotations to boot'.⁷⁰

Coetzee's translation of the English *gas*, in hosting the Dutch *gas* but not *gast/guest*, demonstrates this dilemma. One might say that the translation is inhospitable to the word which is a guest of *gas*, namely *gast*. Coetzee's English translation practice is inhospitable, even hostile, to the Dutch text in the very act of being hospitable to it; even as the *whole-hole-holy* sequence adds meaning to the poem, the subtraction of *gast* from *gas* subtracts meaning from it. In a word, Coetzee's translation stands to the original in a relation of 'hostpitality', to extend Derrida's characterization of the complex ethical relationship with 'the foreigner (*hostis*) welcomed as guest or as enemy'.⁷¹ This relationship involves an interplay between hospitality and hostility out of which Derrida fashions a new term: 'Hospitality, hostility, *hostpitality*'.⁷² An intricate layer of meaning, of the order elaborated so exhaustively by Derrida, is implicit in the poem yet subtracted from it once *gas* is not associated with *gast/guest*, and it becomes arguably more difficult to see the poem as enacting the complex relationship of the I and You, whether this You is a human other or God, in terms of the possibility that the I as gas- (or now guest-) fitter attempts, in vain, to find the You as host, or indeed guest: 'As I move past You seem to slip away'.⁷³ The You is here associated with *gas* and might be read as an uncanny guest in being associated with *gas* as *gast*, an entity of potential chaos that enters into homes as a guest and, providing heat and a comfortable, hospitable sense of being at home, can yet also escape through a hole and turn into an inhuman, hostile killer that yet cannot be grasped. Additionally, the association of *gas* and *gast/guest* reinforces the ruse of the I's disguise as gasfitter by means of which he enters into private spaces to look for the You: 'Indeed I can quite freely step inside | as (at your service) gasfitter by trade. | At your address, by daylight, on the job | disguised in workman's clothing, I wheel round | and behold You standing there'.⁷⁴ The I is not a real fitter, but only guests as one.

⁶⁹ Lewis (2004) 261, 262–3.

⁷⁰ See Ch. 18 below.

⁷¹ Derrida (2000*b*) 45.

⁷² The Latin *hostis* (stranger, foreigner) means both enemy and guest. Moreover, it also means host. In another essay Derrida refers to the logic involved in the relation between host and guest by means of the slightly different term 'hostpitality'. See Derrida (2000*a*) 3–18; also see Derrida (1999) 15–123.

⁷³ Achterberg (2004*b*) 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 3–5.

This intricate logic of hospitality and hostility is also the logic of the relation between criticism and the classic that we have seen Coetzee adumbrate in the essay on the classic. The classic text plays host to criticism, its enemy, a foreigner. But this foreigner also plays host to what it attacks, namely the classic, itself a foreigner, and thereby allows it to survive so that it lives on beyond the limited context where it appears to be at home, namely the cultural time and place from which it emanates. Moreover, as we have seen, Coetzee is quite clearly aware of the role of his *own* criticism, and translation-as-criticism, in the process of hospitality towards, respectively, the original and the classic-as-original. This makes of his own criticism, for instance the essay on the classic, properly an instance of critique, if critique is understood as criticism which sceptically turns back onto itself in order reflexively to criticize itself.⁷⁵ In reading Eliot's understanding of the classic as caught undecidably between different orders of history—the transcendental-poetic, the sociocultural—Coetzee's criticism turns into critique since he shows how he himself is similarly caught between these possibilities. Moreover, his critique is also a way of paying homage to Eliot since it is an instance of hospitality that at once distances itself from Eliot in reading him critically, yet embraces Eliot in turning criticism into critique, as in doing so Coetzee critically associates himself with Eliot.

If criticism turns into self-reflexive critique that involves homage, and if translation is a form of criticism, then translation, too, may be 'one of the instruments of the cunning of history'⁷⁶ in helping ensure the survival of the classic. As such, the inseparable motifs of betrayal and fidelity in translation to which I referred at the start of this essay may well be less incompatible than they at first appear to be. Lack of fidelity, even downright hostility, might serve the classic better than obsequious insistence on rendering it in an apparently straightforward way. Certainly, as a craftsman, a 'cabinet-maker'⁷⁷ or—indeed—a gasfitter, the translator needs to work through 'observation and practice' so as to 'identify semantic nuances in the source and find ways of representing these, even at times when the target language may prove resistant'.⁷⁸

Might one then say that Coetzee's approach to translation as a craft and his approach to the relation between translation and 'the classic' as hospitality are characterized by a certain 'abusive fidelity'⁷⁹ whereby the translator needs to deal with the necessary impossibility of translating adequately, not by cancelling out the original's transgressiveness but by foregrounding it even 'when the target language may prove resistant'? If this is so, might a critically

⁷⁵ Benhabib (1986) 32–3.

⁷⁶ Coetzee (2001) 16.

⁷⁷ See Ch. 18 below.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*

⁷⁹ See Lewis (2004).

faithful translator of the classic attempt to bring to the fore its foreignness or otherness rather than smoothing it over? Would this suggest a practice of foreignizing the classic?⁸⁰ Finally, how does Coetzee's approach to his colonial identity, as someone 'no longer European, not yet African'⁸¹ who yet translates and critically interrogates metropolitan classics, relate to his practice as novelist and critic? These are questions which might be explored further in view of Coetzee's encounter with the classic and translation as a form of hospitality, between homage and critique.

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⁸⁰ I am, of course, thinking here of Venuti's influential though controversial strategy of foreignizing translation (1995; 1998) which for reasons of space I cannot here discuss. See esp. Venuti (1995) 1–42, 273–313, for a lucid exposition of the relation between fluency, the invisibility of the translator, and the translator's duty to reduce the reduction of the otherness of the foreign text. For criticism of Venuti's position, see esp. Pym's caustic review (1996) 166–7, which raises questions of causality; Paloposki (2001) 76, 81, who argues that there is no single 'tradition' of translation from which we can infer that translators have universally been marginalized; Tymoczko (2000) 39, who points out that Venuti's work is highly culturally specific and not applicable to other, in particular colonial, contexts; Rendall (1996) 362, who notes that domesticating strategies can play a subversive role in colonial contexts; and Shamma (2005) 62–6, who shows that Orientalists have, paradoxically, deployed foreignizing strategies in order to domesticate foreign texts by rendering them exotic.

⁸¹ Coetzee (1988) 11.

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‘Das Altertum das sich nicht übersetzen lässt’: Translation and Untranslatability in Ancient History

Neville Morley

The title of this piece derives from the suggestion of a German colleague as to how one might translate the idea of ‘untranslatability’. There is a more straightforward alternative to the phrase: forming a noun from the adjective *unübersetzbar*, untranslatable, as Benjamin¹ deployed the term *Übersetzbarkeit*, from *übersetzbar*, for ‘translatability’. However, the attractive feature of the version above is the way that it seems to emphasize the idea of a resistance to translation, rather than presenting ‘untranslatableness’ as an intrinsic property of a word, text, or language; it might be rendered back into English as ‘the antiquity that does not let itself be translated’. It is this resistance, the resistance of the concept or language to translation and, more particularly, the resistance of the interpreter to any attempt at a translation, that underlies the practice in ancient history of deploying concepts that are, or appear to be, untranslated words from Greek or Latin: *polis*, *demos*, *equites*, *familia*, and so forth.

The focus of historians’ concerns is on the translatability not of particular texts, as in Benjamin’s discussion, but simultaneously of individual terms and concepts and of an entire world. That is not to say that the term ‘translatability’ is ever employed; as I discuss in the first section, language tends to be treated within historiography as something entirely transparent and unproblematic. Historians have proved resistant to any ideas, such as those raised by translation theory, that threaten to undermine belief in their direct, unmediated access to and knowledge of a ‘real’ past. The basic question of identity versus difference, unavoidable in any encounter with another culture, underlies many of the most important debates about the history of antiquity, but

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¹ Benjamin (1972).

these issues are never discussed in terms of representation or translation. In so far as historians engage at all with questions of language, their primary concern is always the fear of 'anachronism', of understanding antiquity in terms of concepts that are excessively modern (especially those tainted with the assumptions of economic or sociological theory). Underpinning this resistance to one sort of translation is the assumption that plain, straightforward, everyday language and vocabulary are free from any such 'modernizing' overtones.

In the name of the avoidance of anachronism, many historians also employ 'original' terms and concepts, both in their descriptions of antiquity and in paraphrases and citations of ancient texts. As I discuss in the second part of this essay, this practice is presented both as a means of ensuring 'fidelity' by avoiding inevitably misleading translations and, in many cases, of gaining an insight into the society being studied. Implicit in many historical studies is the assumption, echoing a long tradition of anthropological study, that language both shapes and reveals the particular features of a culture, especially at points of greatest untranslatability. In contrast to the anthropological approach, however, where key concepts are examined in order to be able to compare that culture's ruling ideas with those of other societies, historians of classical antiquity often seem determined to insist that untranslatability equates to incomparability. The ostentatious avoidance of anachronism, especially when ancient concepts are simply deployed in an account rather than being the focus of attention, becomes a means of asserting the uniqueness of classical culture.

Translation theory thus raises important questions for historiography, both about the processes of interpretation of ancient evidence and about the rhetorical techniques employed to represent the past. As historians draw on published translations as well as on their own renditions of ancient texts, so their work in turn influences the production of new translations, by reshaping ideas of the historical context within which the texts should be interpreted and offering an understanding of the connotations of certain 'key' words. Beyond this mutual influence, however, both translators and historians are caught up in the web of assumptions associated with the idea of the 'classical'. The universal and transhistorical status of the classical rests on a curious mixture of translatability and untranslatability, set apart from and never wholly assimilable to modern culture but never fully embedded in the culture that produced it. 'Classical antiquity' is similarly understood and represented by historians both as directly accessible and comprehensible and as clearly separate and not-modern; partly translatable and partly resistant to translation.

HISTORY AND TRANSLATION

Historians tend to regard language as a transparent and straightforward tool for communicating information.² It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that issues of translation are not discussed extensively by ancient historians, nor brought to the attention of their students, despite the very obvious fact that the sources for the history of antiquity, with the exception of archaeological evidence, are in other languages. The omission of the topic from a twenty-year-old introductory book on *Sources for Ancient History* might be explained by the fact that its intended readership was ‘the classically-trained student’,³ so that command of Latin and Greek could be taken for granted; however, it does not feature any more prominently in recent work such as Pelling’s *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian*,⁴ which makes no such assumptions about its readers’ knowledge of ancient languages. Underlying both books, I would argue, is the assumption that meaning can be clearly and unambiguously established through purely technical linguistic procedures, and hence that a translation suitable for historical analysis—focused primarily on information transfer rather than literary character⁵—will always be available, whether through the historian’s own linguistic abilities or by means of a published edition. Interpretation, on this reading, is something that follows translation, rather than being inextricably bound up with it.

In the absence of any general consideration of the issues involved, it is necessary to infer the assumptions that drive historical practice from the products of that practice and from the discussions of specific cases where translation apparently becomes too complex and/or ideological a process to be ignored completely. The practice that most frequently provokes such debate is the description of ancient society in terms that are felt to be excessively ‘modernizing’, naturalizing antiquity to the present to an undesirable or illegitimate degree. This accusation is commonly levelled against the employment of modern technical concepts, drawing on the ideas and applying the language of economics, or sociology, or psychoanalysis to the study of the classical past.⁶ The methodological issues involved in the application of ‘theory’ in historical interpretation seem often to pale besides its rhetorical dimension; indeed, ‘theory’ is most often identified on the basis of its distinctive and non-classical vocabulary, contrasted unfavourably with allowing the past to speak ‘in its own terms’—which is to say, in everyday, straightforward, and non-technical language.

² Berkhofer (1995); Morley (1999) 116–27.

³ Crawford (1983) 98.

⁴ Pelling (2000). ⁵ Barnstone (1993) 3–7.

⁶ Cf. Morley (2004).

The kinds of modern terms that are thus rejected are felt to have an excess of content (the theoretical and methodological ‘baggage’ supplied by their origins in another discipline) and to carry with them misleading associations. To employ a term such as ‘class’ in analysing ancient society is, from this perspective, automatically to impose anachronistic assumptions about the determining power of economic structures and the inevitability of social conflict, as well as bringing to mind twentieth-century ideological debates and historical events, whether or not the writer intends to communicate any of this. Even if the social analysis offered by an ancient author such as Aristotle, focused on the conflict between rich and poor in the Greek state, seems to call out for the use of the word ‘class’, this must be resisted in favour of more neutral and less potentially misleading terminology. On the other hand, if the modernizing writer defines the term carefully and explicitly in order to remove unhelpful associations and render it more useful for cross-cultural analysis, she is all the more evidently guilty of lapsing into jargon, the exclusive and esoteric language of scholarly cliques where words can be given a private and specialized meaning, rather than remaining within the public discourse of proper history. The rhetoric of much ancient history is deliberately plain, unfancy, and accessible, resisting the translation of the classical past into terms that assimilate it too much to the present—or to other disciplines, especially the social sciences.⁷

The mere name of anachronism is, as Nicole Loraux puts it, ‘an infamous accusation’ in ancient history.⁸ The response to this critique from those historians better disposed to theoretical approaches is to turn the accusation back against their accusers: the theoretically informed historian claims to be fully conscious of the risks of anachronism and in control of her terminology, whereas more traditional historians are quite oblivious to the generalizations and anachronisms concealed in the ‘everyday’ language they employ.⁹ Explicitly modern terms of analysis draw the reader’s attention to the role of the historian in interpreting and presenting the past in a particular way; to translate antiquity using apparently neutral and straightforward terms such as ‘city’, ‘state’, or ‘trade’ may be far more misleading, concealing the degree to which ancient institutions were significantly different in important respects from their modern counterparts. Ancient ‘trade’ differed from modern activity not only in its scale and material infrastructure but in its relation to the structure of society, in the relative importance of markets and market forces, and in the way that it was understood by the ancients themselves—all of

⁷ Cf. Fulbrook (2002) 192–3; Morris (2002).

⁸ Loraux (1993) 23.

⁹ Cf. Finley (1975) 60–74.

which is concealed by the use of the same term for both phenomena.¹⁰ Another example is the use of such words as ‘middle class’ or ‘bourgeoisie’ in discussions of ancient social structure,¹¹ unselfconsciously evoking the dynamic role ascribed to this group in some accounts of the rise of modernity and capitalism. Everyday language like this, it is argued, naturalizes antiquity to the present, and obscures the existence of a vast gulf between ancient and modern, to a far greater degree than terms that are explicitly marked as non-classical; it is far more modernizing in practice than terminology which is overtly related to a specific historical and cultural context.

There is at least an implicit recognition here that any act of cultural translation—any attempt at writing history—will involve some measure of anachronism. Historians’ commitment to the idea of a past that is found as much as invented means that this can never not be regarded as a problem or a danger. However, rather than embarking on the impossible task of trying to exclude anachronism, what is now seen to matter is that its inevitability should be acknowledged and deliberately negotiated; the historian’s account should be presented as a modern historical interpretation rather than claiming to be ‘the past as it actually was’. Put another way, the only acceptable translation is one which does not conceal the foreignness of the original. This does not, of course, solve the problem of which terms or concepts are actually acceptable or appropriate, or how this should be determined; as Mary Fulbrook has suggested, ‘the arguments over anachronistic concepts serve to some extent, it seems to me, as red herrings or camouflage for more serious problems relating to the lack of a shared conceptual vocabulary in the present’.¹² However, it represents at least a minor step forward if the debate on whether ‘class’ is an inappropriate term of analysis for ancient society should focus on competing modern interpretative frameworks and presuppositions rather than on an automatic and wholesale rejection of all modern terminology on the grounds of anachronism.¹³

The conclusion of this line of argument is that all key terms, whether or not associated with an explicit theoretical tradition, potentially have misleading modern connotations and so need to be carefully evaluated and explicated. Historians rarely suggest seriously that terms such as ‘city’ and ‘trade’ should be abandoned altogether, for all their non-classical overtones; they remain indispensable for identifying significant historical phenomena. The careful definition of such words, explicitly considering their contemporary associations, is frequently used as the starting-point for a discussion of what is distinctive

¹⁰ Cf. von Reden (1995); Morley (2007).

¹¹ See e.g. Rostovtzeff (1941) 1125–6; (1957) 190.

¹² Fulbrook (2002) 86.

¹³ Cf. Finley (1985) 48–50; Harris (1988).

about their ancient manifestations. What is important is that their appropriateness, even or especially if they seem to be straightforward and innocuous, should not be taken for granted. Conversely, it is even possible to imagine a defence of the use of the term 'bourgeoisie' in ancient history, on the basis that it need not carry specific historical and political connotations (Rostovtzeff himself referred to the characteristics of 'the *bourgeoisie* of all times and of all countries'¹⁴); a difficult enterprise in English, admittedly, but plenty of German restaurants advertise, quite unironically, 'gute bürgerliche Küche'. The fundamental problem with Rostovtzeff's approach is not that his chosen term could never conceivably be acceptable in an account of classical antiquity but that he simply did not recognize that there was a conceptual issue to be addressed.

ANTIQUITY IN ITS OWN TERMS?

As a result of these debates, contemporary ancient history offers many examples of conceptual sophistication and sensitivity to the effects of a particular choice of vocabulary in representing the past. However, the point at issue is generally seen as a consequence of the plenitude of meanings and associations of certain modern terms, rather than as something that is inherent in every act of cultural translation. Many historians remain committed to the quixotic search for a neutral, value-free terminology with which to describe the past, and this drives their debates around individual concepts. One might chart the history of the discipline through the way that hitherto taken-for-granted terms of analysis suddenly, and usually temporarily, become fiercely contested. For example, did the ancients have slaves? For a brief period in the late 1950s and early 1960s this became a serious question.

The word *Sklave*—*eslave*, *schiaivo*—which originates in the Middle Ages and originally denoted Slavic captives from eastern Europe, can be transferred to antiquity only in an anachronistic manner, and that means only with misunderstanding. Further, the word calls to mind the Negro slavery of North America and the colonies in recent centuries, which makes its transfer to the ancient institution even more difficult. The ancient 'slave' is an entirely different social type.¹⁵

If a label is seriously misleading, perhaps it can be replaced by a neutral one. The obvious choice for the Greek historian is the Greek word *doulos*, which can have no non-Greek associations. But this is pretence. All words have associations, and they cannot be removed by fiat... *Doulos* as an isolated word may have no meaning to a modern

¹⁴ Rostovtzeff (1941) 1126.

¹⁵ Lauffer (1961) 380.

historian, but as soon as he reads and thinks about *douloi* in Athens he cannot, being human, avoid making connections with servitude, and hence with slaves. He may persist with absolute rigour in calling them *douloi*, never slaves, but all that he will accomplish by this artificial procedure will be to prevent his more general statements from being properly explicit, from being examined systematically.¹⁶

Lauffer's proposal that *doulos* and *servus* should be left untranslated in discussions of ancient society is a prime example of a general assumption that 'neutral' terminology can always be found in the original language if required. His argument did not prove persuasive: 'slave' remains a standard term of historical analysis, with no sense today that it is a problematic word; such debate as there is focuses on whether or not Spartan 'helots' can usefully be described as slaves, or whether the term 'serfs' might be less misleading. However, numerous other terms borrowed from Latin and Greek are common currency in ancient history. Finley himself is, on the face of it, inconsistent in this regard, defending the use of 'slave' against Lauffer's argument but regularly employing transliterated Greek terms such as *polis* and *demos* in his work.

However, there is a significant though subtle difference between the practices of these two historians. The recourse to borrowing from the source language in Finley's case, as with many writers on antiquity, is inspired not only by concern about the excessive content of some modern words but by a sense of the inadequacy of English to express particular ancient concepts fully or accurately—because either the available modern terms have insufficient content or there simply are no suitable words. This practice is not, of course, peculiar to historiography. Most languages draw on a repertoire of such borrowings to describe contemporary phenomena, from fully naturalized words such as bungalow, via terms such as 'Schadenfreude' or 'savoir faire' that remain recognizably 'foreign' (and may or may not be marked off with italics or quote marks), to entirely alien words, such as the Welsh *hiraeth* or the German *Sehnsucht* (both of which describe a particular sort of longing or yearning), which, at this stage in the process of their adoption, can only be used if their origin and meaning are made clear at the beginning. The perception of historical distance between the present and the classical past implies far greater scope for a mismatch between the true character of antiquity and the capacity of modern languages to express it. This has obvious implications for historical interpretation: if English (or French, or German) lacks an exact equivalent for a Latin or Greek term, any attempt at a translation will inevitably be incomplete or misleading—or simply long-winded, if a full explanation needs to be provided every time a concept is mentioned.

¹⁶ Finley (1975) 63; cf. (1980) 68–71.

For many historians, it seems simpler to adopt the word from the source language whenever this lack of equivalence is suspected, rather than attempt an inevitably inadequate translation.

The result is that the discourse of ancient history is littered with such terms, some of which are regarded as sufficiently important and/or familiar to be used even without explanation or textual emphasis. A brief survey of the indices of some introductory works on classical Greece yields numerous examples: *Agora*, *anakrisis*, *apodektai*, *archai*, *archons*, *ateleia*, *atimia*, and *axones*,¹⁷ *banausoi*, *bema* and *bouleuterion*,¹⁸ *cheirotomia*, *chlamys*, *chōra*, *choregia*, *chrematistai*, *cleruchs*, and *crater*¹⁹ and *dēmagōgos*, *demes*, *dēmokratia*, *dēmos*, *Demos*, *dikaioσynē*, *dikasts*, and *dokimasia*.²⁰ Perhaps the most important and widely-used example is *polis*:

Polis (pl. *-leis*) (1) City. (2) City-state. The typical *polis* had a territory of less than 100 sq. km and a citizen population of fewer than 1000 adult males... The *polis* usually comprised a city and its hinterland. The city was the political, religious, economic and military centre, even if most of the citizens lived on the land, outside the city walls.²¹

Polis (pl. *poleis*) πόλις (πόλεις): the name given to the self-governing city-states of the Greek world. Each *polis* had its own laws of citizenship, coinage, customs, festivals, rites, etc. Athens, Corinth, Thebes, Sparta were all separate, autonomous *poleis*.²²

The phrase 'city-state' which I just used with reference to Aristotle is an English convention in rendering the Greek word *polis*. This convention, like its German equivalent *Stadtstaat*, was designed (I do not know when or by whom) to get around a terminological confusion in ancient Greek.²³

The Greek word can mean city, or state, or, since the vast majority of Greek states were centred on an eponymous city such as Athens or Corinth, city and state simultaneously or interchangeably. Choosing one English translation, and thus closing off the other possibilities, would be misleading in many instances; choosing the appropriate translation according to particular contexts would disguise the potentially significant fact that the Greeks used the same word. The modern coinage of 'city-state' is not considered especially helpful by many ancient historians, mainly because it is associated with such places as medieval Florence that were more literally city-states, whereas the

¹⁷ Stockton (1990) 193.

¹⁸ Hansen (1991) 394; with extensive glossary, 348–70.

¹⁹ Orrioux and Schmitt Pantel (1999) 417; with Lexicon, 392–400, although the last three words in the list do not appear in it.

²⁰ Sinclair (1988) 245; no glossary, but specific references to where an explanation of a particular term may be found.

²¹ Hansen (1991) 364–5.

²² JACT (1984) 370.

²³ Finley (1981) 4.

ancient *polis* brought together city and rural territory on an equal footing.²⁴ Using the Greek term, it is assumed, effectively sidesteps the issue. Introductory works usually gloss the word in the context of a general discussion of Greek political structures; in more specialized studies, it can be taken for granted that readers will be familiar with the term and its range of reference.

The primary aim of this practice is, in most cases, fidelity to the past, in the sense of reproducing the reality of antiquity as accurately and precisely as possible. It is an attempt to evade the apparent inevitability of omission, misapprehension, and anachronism where no exact equivalent to an ancient concept is available. However, it is often possible to identify an additional motive, in both historical and philosophical studies, which clearly draws on a belief that the language itself offers the key to understanding ancient culture—focusing, in Benjamin's terms, on what the language itself communicates rather than what is communicated through language.²⁵ Using original terms is felt to enhance the fidelity of representation of antiquity because it deepens understanding of the particularity of the past.

This idea has a long history: 'The *mental individuality* of a people and the *shape of its language* are so intrinsically fused with one another that if one were given, the other would have to be completely derivable from it.'²⁶ Language is seen to shape culture, by setting limits, through its vocabulary and grammatical structure, on what can be thought: compare Finley's argument that the absence of suitable words in Greek or Latin for such key economic terms as labour, production, or capital reflects the non-modern, non-capitalist nature of the ancient economy,²⁷ or Forrest on the implications for political history of the absence of any word for 'aristocracy' in seventh-century BC Greece:

If this is true, an apparently innocent, even self-evident judgement like 'tyranny in Greece was brought about by dissatisfaction with aristocratic rule' is false, and it is indeed false if we mean by it that men said to each other in the market-place 'I hate aristocratic rule' as they might now say 'I hate capitalism'. Rather they said 'I hate those men of families a, b or c who rule us', and their reason would not be 'because they are aristocrats' but 'because they have done x or have not done y'.²⁸

More importantly, however, there is the sense that a culture reveals its distinctive character through its particular ways of expressing ideas and describing the world. This generally focuses precisely on those terms which appear most untranslatable and most peculiar to the culture in question. To

²⁴ Cf. the debates in Molho, Raaflaub, and Emlen (1991).

²⁵ Benjamin (1977).

²⁶ Humboldt (1988) 46.

²⁷ Finley (1985) 17–21.

²⁸ Forrest (1966) 103.

return for a moment to the modern examples noted earlier, while there is little if any belief that *savoir-faire* is a key characteristic of French culture or mentality, it has been argued that the fact Welsh needs the term *hiraeth* tells us something significant about the emotional outlook and cultural pre-conceptions of the Welsh.²⁹ This focus on actors' rather than observers' categories in the study of alien cultures echoes the tradition of social and anthropological analysis known as *Verstehen*. 'Implicit in all the approaches I am discussing is the necessity of thinking in the language and categories of the society being studied... to get as close as possible to the position of the Anthropological observer in the field.'³⁰ The meanings and associations of key terms, identified as being central to or revealing of the world-view of the society under investigation, are teased out, examined, probed for hidden inconsistencies or contradictions, and considered in a broader context.

The issue that faces us is, as I say, how to describe such situations in a usefully informative way; informative both as to them and to the implications they have for how we need to think about legal process as a general phenomenon in the world... It is a matter of talking about irregular things in regular terms without destroying the irregular quality that drew us to them in the first place.³¹

There is a strong sense in much writing on ancient intellectual history that Greek thought can be encapsulated in the various meanings of key concepts like *logos*, *physis*, *psyche*, *muthos*, and so forth, so that the words themselves become the chief object of study.³² It is generally assumed that the words that seem most resistant to translation will be most revealing, but, as Heidegger argued, one can translate the Greek word for the verb 'to be' perfectly correctly without any difficulty, and still miss its proper meaning for the Greeks: 'we ask only whether in this correct translation we also think correctly. We ask only whether in this most common of all translations anything at all is thought.'³³

It is in this spirit that *Polis* becomes the key term in Jakob Burckhardt's *Griechische Kulturgeschichte* not only as the actual political institution that nurtured Greek culture but as an idea, a particular way of thinking about human social relationships that then gave birth to the institution.³⁴ In other words, language constructs reality; we will best understand ancient political history by understanding how the Greeks and Romans thought about it in their own terms:

²⁹ See e.g. Renan (1948); Arnold (1962). ³⁰ Humphreys (1978) 26.

³¹ Geertz (2000) 224. ³² See e.g. Vernant (1983); Buxton (1999).

³³ Heidegger (1975) 23. ³⁴ Gossman (2000) 297–346.

As substitutes for 'the rich', Greek writers employed words that meant literally 'the useful (or worthy)' (*chrestoi*), 'the best' (*beltistoi*), 'the powerful' (*dynatoi*), 'the notable' (*gnorimoi*), 'the well-born' (*gennaioi*); for 'the poor' they said 'the many' (*hoi polloi*), 'the mean' (*cheirones*), 'the knaves' (*pomeroi*), 'the mob' (*ochlos*)... The language of politics thus confirms Aristotle's 'important truth', that the state is an arena for conflicting interests, conflicting classes.³⁵

These two men, Herodotus says, *edunasteron*, were 'dynasts', and the word is as clear a sign as we could want of the kind of politics they placed—each 'stood at the head of an aristocratic pyramid'. But Kleisthenes 'added the *demos* to his faction', a *demos* 'which he had previously ignored'. Herodotus may not have chosen his words deliberately but they could not be more apt. 'Faction' is again an aristocratic term; it belongs in a world in which a *demos* does not exist as a political entity, in which a *demos* cannot play any part. Like Herodotus, I believe, Kleisthenes mixed his categories with disastrous results.³⁶

For both Finley and Forrest, the vocabulary of ancient politics reveals the cultural attitudes and assumptions that determined political activity in ancient Greece, and so tells us far more about its workings than descriptions of institutional structures and processes. The implication of this vocabulary is that the *polis*, democratic or otherwise, existed in a world where the ruling ideas of social behaviour remained aristocratic and elitist; conflict was therefore inevitable, regardless of the ideals of democracy or the claims of such interested parties as the Athenian politician Pericles (in Thucydides' account) that a city like Athens could transcend such divisions.

THE UNTRANSLATABILITY EFFECT

The use of transliterated ancient terms to highlight the distinctive character of ancient conceptions works effectively when the words and their meanings are the focus of discussion. The practice becomes more problematic when the borrowing is used not to examine how the ancients conceived of their world but simply to describe how it was: when it is treated not as an idea, part of the conceptual world of ancient culture, but as a real object. For example, the word *demos* could refer in ancient accounts either to the entire citizen body of the Greek state or specifically to the poor majority. As Finley notes, 'there was no uncertainty in the usage in any particular [ancient] context'; but this is not true of his own use of the term, for example when speaking of the political reforms of Kleisthenes being 'accepted by the *demos*'.³⁷ The ambiguity of the

³⁵ Finley (1983) 2.

³⁶ Forrest (1966) 191.

³⁷ Finley (1983) 2, 44.

ancient term, highly revealing for the study of Greek political attitudes, creates a potential confusion when it is used to refer to a substantive object; we can only assume that in this context the word is now taken to have a single, straightforward meaning. Similarly, when the historian talks of ‘the *polis*’ in material terms (‘the rise of the *polis*’), rather than as a concept or ‘what the Greeks referred to as the *polis*’, there is, on the face of it, a basic uncertainty as to which of the varying meanings of the word in Greek—city, state, city-state—is intended.

In practice, historians appear to be habituated to the fact that in such usage the meaning of the borrowed term has changed: it no longer refers directly and exclusively to the word in the original language, but has become a label for a modern concept. The word *polis* takes on a single, fixed meaning; either one of the possible meanings of the original is privileged over the others or, more commonly, what is referred to is not any of the ancient definitions but the modern understanding of the institution and its nature. Effectively, the ancient word has been translated while appearing to remain unchanged; the transliterated term is both ancient and modern, a modern interpretation of the original word presented as if it were the original. In Gawantka’s detailed study of the process of adoption of ‘the so-called *polis*’,³⁸ he argues that the shift from the ancient term as itself to the ancient term as a label for a modern theory is marked by the typographical shift from reproduction ($\pi\acute{o}\lambda\iota\varsigma$) to transliteration (*polis*, polis, Polis), but in fact the transliterated forms can be used for either purpose—often in the same historical account.

This can be seen as a third aspect of the use of transliterated terms in historiography, as a form of technical vocabulary that allows specialists to communicate more efficiently with one another—the role that such terms as ‘repression’ or ‘marginal utility’ play in other disciplines. The word serves as a shorthand reference to the scholarly debates and issues with which historians are familiar, and in many cases the contested nature of such concepts is implicitly recognized and accepted (though this may not always be obvious to a non-specialist reader). The conventional criticisms of the use of jargon certainly apply in this case; like other technical vocabulary, classical borrowings tend to be exclusive and to privilege certain readers, even if accidentally—the *pentakosiomedimnoi*, as their name implies, owned land which yielded at least 500 *medimnoi* a year’ (perhaps, if you know Greek numbers)—as well as establishing the writer as knowledgeable, authoritative, the guardian of access to a culture that can only *really* be appreciated by those who speak its language. However, the most significant problem with such usage lies in the uneasy relationship between the modern and the ancient

³⁸ Gawantka (1985).

concepts existing under a single label; at the very least, the potential for confusion as the same word may be used in both ways in the same text, and the absence of any consistency of practice within the discipline as a whole.

Comparison of the indices, glossaries, and texts of different works on Greek history reveals the enormous variation in how many, and which, words are borrowed from the original language rather than translated. In an edited volume on *Classical Greece*, for example, the chapter by Thomas on ‘The Classical City’ has sixty-five references to ‘polis’, forty-one to ‘city-state’, nineteen to ‘city’, and eight to ‘state’, while also proposing that ‘citizen-state’ might be a better translation of the term;³⁹ Osborne’s ‘Epilogue’, meanwhile, uses ‘city’ thirty-five times, ‘city-state’ four times, and ‘polis’ not at all. There is no consensus within historiography on the necessity of using transliterated terms, let alone an agreed technical vocabulary. Practice varies from historian to historian, sometimes with an explicit summary or justification of the approach adopted—“city-state”, “constitution” and “democracy” are usable equivalents of *polis*, *politeia* and *demokratia*, whereas concepts such as “sovereignty”, “politician” and “political party” are best avoided⁴⁰—but more often presented without comment, the implication being that this is entirely unremarkable and unproblematic. The reader is left to infer the methodological presuppositions that may underlie the chosen practice, to question whether in fact any conscious decision has been made in the choice of vocabulary, and finally to consider rhetorical effects of a particular approach, including the extent to which it embodies assumptions about how to represent the past to a modern audience.

One of the key issues, especially for works intended for students and non-specialists, is that of ‘accessibility’, in the context of the decline of knowledge of classical languages⁴¹ and the changing audience for ancient history. Times have changed, in more than one respect, since George Grote could quote Xenophon and Plutarch in the original without translation.⁴² Inevitably, there is no agreement either on what approach is most effective or, more interestingly, on what should be made accessible; in the name of accessibility, transliterated terms might equally well be rejected in favour of less forbidding, everyday language or widely adopted as a means of introducing students without Greek or Latin to the flavour of classical culture embodied in its ruling concepts. For example, the stated rationale for Meiggs’s revisions of J. B. Bury’s *A History of Greece*⁴³ was the need to take account of new

³⁹ Osborne (2000) 72. ⁴⁰ Hansen (1991) p. xi.

⁴¹ Cf. Stray (1998) esp. 235–97 on developments in the twentieth century.

⁴² Grote (1872) i. p. x; ii. 468–9.

⁴³ Bury (1902); Bury and Meiggs (1951); (1975).

archaeological evidence and to update aspects of Bury's language which 'now have a period flavour which many regard as a distraction',⁴⁴ but at the same time Bury's copious marginal notes, often giving the Greek equivalents of terms used in the main text,⁴⁵ were abandoned without explanation; a glossary of transliterated terms was added, while Greek words (especially in Greek script) were removed from the text. An alternative approach is found in Stockton's work on Athenian democracy, which uses the phrase *dikastai kata dēmous* three times (along with many other transliterated terms); it has to be glossed as 'circuit judges . . . to adjudicate local suits' and 'the thirty local or circuit judges' before a full explanation is provided over fifty pages later.⁴⁶ At first glance this appears excessive and rather clumsy, but in the absence of any agreed conventions on which terms should be translated or transliterated it makes a kind of sense: if the aim is to give trainee historians access to the world of professional ancient history and its key terms, it may be easier to provide them with a long glossary of Greek words than with an index of the different ways in which those words might have been translated into English.

It might seem from this that the choice of whether or not to use transliterated terms is simply a matter of individual stylistic preferences and different beliefs about how far classical culture can be comprehended without at least some knowledge of its languages. However, there are two respects in which the effects of transliteration in the historical text are rather more problematic. The first is the way that the use of the ancient term becomes an alibi for the historian's work of interpretation. It creates the impression of a direct, unmediated access to classical antiquity and its mode of thought; modern interpretations, essential for making any sense of the sources, are disguised as ancient concepts, and the work of the historian is presented as a straightforward exercise in the recovery of the past 'as it really was'. Whereas a class-based analysis of Athenian society can only ever be understood as a modern interpretation of the past, open to the accusation of anachronism and projection, an account based on the conflict between the *demos* and the *aristoi* appears to emerge from the past itself via contemporary sources. Modern disputes about the nature of Greek society are projected back onto the ambiguities of the ancient term *polis*. The indispensable role of the historian in imagining and representing the past is subtly occluded; so too the necessity of translation, as ancient culture appears simply to have been transliterated. Acknowledgement of the problems involved in the translation of a few key terms draws attention away from the wider issue by implying that all other

⁴⁴ Bury and Meiggs (1975) p. vi.

⁴⁵ e.g. Bury (1902) 15–16; (1913) 25, 27.

⁴⁶ Stockton (1990) 24, 42, 97.

terms can be readily comprehended; it can become a mere gesture towards complexity, a performance of the avoidance of anachronism.

Secondly, the choice of vocabulary determines what sort of past is represented; borrowed terms establish it as exotic, other, and classical. This can be very effective when employed deliberately as a rhetorical technique; for example, Davies uses Greek terms in quotations from ancient sources and in discussions of the Greek world-view while using anthropological and sociological terms in his own analysis.⁴⁷ The work was criticized by one reviewer for 'its jerky alterations between the socio-jargonistic and the stark shock',⁴⁸ but that seems to have been the intended effect; it brings 'the past as somewhat alien' to life at the same time as displaying the work of the historian in constructing that past. As always, a key part of the historian's task is to negotiate, and help the reader negotiate, between similarity and difference, through rhetoric as much as through argument. However, the non-translation of key terms in ancient history is often presented not as a deliberate interpretative or rhetorical strategy but as an unavoidable response to their intrinsic untranslatability—implying that it is impossible to understand antiquity in any terms other than its own.

This represents a sharp deviation from the anthropological *Verstehen* approach, which is explicitly comparative and dialogic; actors' categories are always considered in the light of more general observers' categories, to highlight the particular character of this local manifestation of a broader, if not universal, phenomenon. Thus Geertz unpacks Balinese and Moroccan concepts under the general rubric of 'sense of law' or 'sense of self', and Humphreys studies ancient Greek society through the conceptual apparatus of 'kinship', noting the degree to which ancient terminology and structures broadly, but never entirely, replicate those known from other contexts. This approach is not unknown in ancient history,⁴⁹ but it is alarming to note how often the recourse to actors' terms in ancient history represents an explicit opposition to any sort of comparison of antiquity with other societies. The *polis* is labelled as such to establish that it is not a state in the modern sense, and not comparable to any other form of state.⁵⁰ Even if comparability is not expressly rejected, the danger is that, unless presented within an explicitly comparative context, the use of 'original' terms tends, intentionally or not, to reinforce a perception of classical antiquity as something absolutely separate and unique. *Demokratia* rather than democracy, *ho demos* rather than 'the People'; the quest for fidelity to the difference of the past shades into a sense that it has no connection at all with the modern or with any other culture.

⁴⁷ e.g. Davies (1978) 26–7, 123.

⁴⁸ Rhodes (1980) 297.

⁴⁹ For comparative approaches to understanding the *polis*, see e.g. Weber (1958), Finley (1981), and Molho, Raaflaub, and Emlen (1991).

⁵⁰ Cf. Loraux (1996) 292.

LES SÉDUCTIONS DE L'ALTÉRITÉ

This is clearly a highly ideological perspective; interestingly, it is not consistent in its affiliations or programme. The dominant trend in the last half-century has been to present antiquity as alien to ourselves as well as to our time, in opposition both to the naive modernizing of ancient society and to naive evocations of universal human values. Loraux describes Jean-Pierre Vernant's project, 'to place the Greeks at the greatest possible distance from our present', as a natural reaction of the 1960s generation to the liberal humanist tradition.⁵¹ Historical accounts such as Forrest,⁵² Davies,⁵³ and most of the works of Finley⁵⁴ clearly aim to achieve the same sort of defamiliarization of antiquity, often in explicit reaction to earlier or rival accounts that assimilated it too closely to the present. The refusal to translate, the insistence on the ultimate untranslatability of ancient experience into modern terms and on its independent, intrinsic value, is a strategy to preserve antiquity from misinterpretation and appropriation. It echoes recent arguments in anthropology about the interpretation and representation of non-Western cultures; not least in retaining the humanistic assumption that difference does not equal absolute otherness and hence that a past culture can be rendered intelligible, without violence to its separate identity, through appropriate academic methodology.⁵⁵

However, the 'othering' of classical antiquity can equally serve the cause of the transcendent classicism that Vernant and others opposed; only this unique and incomparable people could have brought forth the true culture, the heritage of the West, whose value and origins are beyond the comprehension of the limited and instrumental perspectives of modern science. Hanson and Heath, in *Who Killed Homer?*, offer an extreme example of the sort of intellectual move that is found frequently in ancient history: only in Greece does the *polis* appear, 'a unique and otherwise unknown political institution', from which derives 'our unchanging Western centre'.⁵⁶ This approach walks a similar tightrope between likeness and difference: classical antiquity cannot be fully translatable into modern terms or it loses its power as the source and repository of transcendent values, but clearly it cannot be wholly alien or inaccessible. The usual response to this dilemma is to emphasize the role of tradition as a source of understanding; although our culture may have lost touch with its classical heritage, it retains, as a birthright, the capacity to relearn how to connect with it.

⁵¹ Loraux (1993) 25. ⁵² Forrest (1966). ⁵³ Davies (1978).

⁵⁴ Most strikingly in Finley (1985). ⁵⁵ Cf. Argyrou (2002).

⁵⁶ Hanson and Heath (2001) 26, 93–4.

Each approach loudly rejects the ideological baggage of the other, obscuring their common assumptions and origins; as is suggested by the emphasis in both cases on the need to resist modernizing translations, they represent different forms of reaction to and rejection of modernity. The first tendency locates an alternative to present conditions, a point of comparison and critique, in a pristine, premodern past; following the template established by Marx, they establish the limitations of modernity by demonstrating that it is time-bound and contingent.⁵⁷ Classical antiquity is not regarded as unique in this respect (even if it is frequently accorded a special exemplary status); comparisons with other premodern societies are therefore not excluded and may even be emphasized as a means of distancing ancient culture from modernity. The second tendency looks instead to an ideal, ahistorical realm of 'classical values' beyond the present; it therefore resists translations that would taint these values by making their origins seem too unclassical or too primitive, too alien to be readily claimed as the origin of the Western tradition, as much as it resists modernizing approaches.

These two perspectives share a fear, articulated as a resistance to 'anachronism', of the totalizing and homogenizing tendencies of modernization, the danger that the past (like the rest of the world) may be reduced to a pale copy of European modernity. The occlusion of the work of the historian as interpreter and translator of the past, not least through the adoption of ancient terminology, is not coincidental but essential for this project; it offers grounding for a belief in the past as an objective reality against which the present can be judged. All political intent is naturally disavowed, as another manifestation of anachronism; the past should impose itself on the modern viewer, not vice versa, not least by compelling her to adopt its vocabulary and to resist the temptation to translate it into her own terms. The refusal to translate, presented as the resistance of the past to translation, creates a particular image of antiquity: the distinctive combination of (imagined) ancient and (concealed) modern, of translatability and untranslatability, that constitutes the classical.

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⁵⁷ Morley (forthcoming).

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Homer and Cinema: Translation and Adaptation in *Le Mépris*

Joanna Paul

Over the past decade, the academic study of receptions of classical antiquity and its texts has flourished. After an earlier focus on receptions of and by what may be perceived as cultural elites, scholars are now increasingly turning to study popular receptions of the ancient world, such as the historical novel, or cinema. Of course, such a distinction between elite and popular culture is bound up with this volume's central question regarding the definition of 'the classic', and will require further discussion in due course. But it is sufficient, for now, to observe that the notion of what constitutes an interesting and productive cultural interaction is more inclusive than it perhaps once was.

The study of cinematic receptions of the classical world has been at the centre of this movement. Since Maria Wyke's *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History*,¹ film's engagement with the ancient historical record has received a good deal of attention. At the same time, though a little less prominently, cinematic receptions of ancient literary texts have also been the subject of enquiry.² The precise nature of that reception might vary, but the notion of adaptation is usually central. In the popular imagination, adaptation is generally understood as a simple process. Filmgoers (for it is with the cinema that adaptation is most strongly associated) will recognize a movie as 'the film of the book', as a 'version of' or 'based on' a written text, and will typically tend towards evaluating the film on the basis of perceived differences from or similarities to the source text, with limited awareness of

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¹ Wyke (1997).

² Useful studies of cinema and ancient history include Joshel, Malamud, and McGuire (2001); Junkelmann (2002); Solomon (2001); Winkler (2001); (2004); Wyke (1997). The latter two also address adaptation of ancient literature. See McKinnon (1986), Michelakis (2001) and (2004) for studies of filmic adaptation of Greek tragedy.

the multitude of factors which affect the process of adaptation. These factors, and the complexities of adaptation itself, have received ample attention from scholars in recent years. Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* is the most recent, and successful, attempt to theorize the concept, arguing for the tripartite nature of adaptation as product, process of interpretative creation, and process of reception. This intricacy is conveyed in her description of adaptation as 'a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing.'³

Still, other strands of academic discourse describe adaptation using language that might seem to obscure this complexity. One particular move provides the focus for this essay: the practice of talking about adaptation in terms of translation, examples of which emerge even from the narrow scholarly field of 'cinema and classics' outlined above.⁴ In a discussion of *Fellini-Satyricon* (1969), J. P. Sullivan described Fellini, who adapted Petronius' *Satyricon* for the screen, as a 'creative translator' of the Roman novel.⁵ Camille Paglia, in a discussion of Homer on film, uses similar language: 'Film versions of novels, plays, and narrative poems often disappoint because the director and screenwriter have failed to translate word-bound ideas into simple visual form.'⁶ Maria Wyke, too, refers to 'translation from the Homeric poems to the Hollywood cinema screen.'⁷ At first glance, I suggest, these comments might be read as invoking, even if unconsciously, the assumption that cinematic adaptation is—or at least ought to be—a straightforward and 'faithful' transferral of an essential 'something' from text to film. In that belief, translation readily presents itself as a metaphor because it too can be understood—according to the most traditional conception, anyway—as a simple and unproblematic process of 'carrying across,' a transferral (so *trans* plus *fero/latus*) of 'something' (presumed to be 'meaning') from one (language) to another. In describing adaptation as translation, then, a confrontation of adaptation's complexity is potentially avoided.

Such an understanding of both translation and adaptation is dangerously simplistic and partial. It is not one, I must stress, that I attribute to the scholars cited above, but their casual equation of translation with adaptation *is*, I argue, something that cries out for deeper analysis. The use of the former as a metaphor for the latter may not conceal a wilful misrepresentation or oversimplification of

³ Hutcheon (2006) 9.

⁴ It is notable that a recent discussion of adaptation observes that 'the vocabulary of adaptation is highly labile... the idiom in which adaptation and appropriation functions is rich and various' (Sanders (2006) 3), but in the list of synonyms then provided (including variation, version, proximation, improvisation, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, reworking, refashioning, and re-evaluation), translation is missing (see also *ibid.* 18).

⁵ Sullivan (2001) 259.

⁶ Paglia (1997) 167–8.

⁷ Wyke (2003) 442.

either process, but there is no pause to consider just what is at stake in referring to an adaptation as a translation (or vice versa). The aim of the present discussion, then, is to analyse carefully the nature and implications of this equation. By examining the relationship between adaptation and translation, the similarities and differences between their presence in theory and practice, we can observe that adaptation may not be synonymous with translation, but the relationship need not be constrained to the metaphorical, either. Instead, I shall argue that they can usefully be understood as *analogous* processes.

This hypothesis is not new. In the 1940s, the film theorist André Bazin was describing cinematic adaptation using terms later reflected in Eugene Nida's translation theories,⁸ and recent film scholarship has more explicitly aligned the two.⁹ Patrick Cattryse¹⁰ suggests a methodology of adaptation 'se base sur quelques théories de la traduction, en fait bien particulières, qui se situent dans une approche plus générale dite polysystémique';¹¹ more recently, Robert Stam¹² has advocated translation as a way of troping adaptation, suggesting as it does 'a principled effort of semiotic transposition, with the inevitable losses and gains typical of any translation'. My own discussion aims to develop these theoretical perspectives by examining how they play out in one particular film, Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963).¹³ In particular, we will be able to consider how the film's depiction of a cinematic production of Homer's *Odyssey* provides valuable reflections on what it means to translate and/or adapt a classic(al) text.

LE MÉPRIS: ADAPTATION AND THE RHETORIC OF FIDELITY

Le Mépris was released at the end of 1963 to a reasonably warm reception, the enthusiasm of which has been far exceeded by the recent explosion of

⁸ Bazin (2000) 19–27.

⁹ Zatlin (2005) 153–4 summarizes examples of translation/adaptation comparisons and Hutcheon (2006) 16–17 provides an astute, but limited, summation of the analogy. Winkler (2007) 9–11 also briefly engages with the similarities between translation and adaptation in his introductory discussion of the 2004 film *Troy*.

¹⁰ Cattryse (1992) 5.

¹¹ That is, a methodology of adaptation 'based on some theories of translation; more specifically, one that locates itself in a more general approach, known as polysystemic'.

¹² Stam (2000) 62.

¹³ Stam (2000) is concerned with Godard's film too, but leaves many questions unaddressed. The present discussion also challenges Stam's invocation of translation as an *alternative* to another common trope of adaptation, fidelity. As the following will demonstrate, the two tropes are in fact not easily separated, but frequently interrelated. Stam (2005a) has a fuller discussion, albeit one less concerned with the translation–adaptation interface.

scholarship on the film, placing it in a central position in Godard's oeuvre.¹⁴ Set into the main narrative of the disintegrating marriage of Paul and Camille Javal (Michel Piccoli and Brigitte Bardot) is a 'film within a film', an adaptation of the *Odyssey* being directed by Fritz Lang (playing himself), and for which Paul has been hired to carry out some rewrites on the script. Conflict arises between Lang, Paul, and the American producer, Jerry Prokosch (Jack Palance), who all have different ideas about how the epic should be filmed—conflict which spills over into 'contempt' in Paul and Camille's marriage, with tragic consequences. Besides the story's human interest, central to *Le Mépris*'s appeal is the sophisticated commentary on adaptation that it provides: not only does it dramatize an adaptation of Homer, it is itself an adaptation of a novel, *Il Disprezzo* by Alberto Moravia (1954).¹⁵

A very brief summary of the different positions held by the key players will suffice.¹⁶ The producer advocates a populist view: spectacle—particularly erotic—is paramount. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this approach is implicitly scorned, particularly by Godard (who had to contend with his own interfering producers demanding more display of Brigitte Bardot's nude flesh). This desire for spectacle is accompanied by a wish—initially prompted by Prokosch, and then adopted by Paul—to focus on the psychology of Homer's characters. In a conversation with Lang, Paul explains that Odysseus himself delayed his return to Ithaca because he was unhappy with Penelope, and that when he does return, he provokes her contempt by dealing insufficiently harshly with the suitors. Lang emphatically rejects this foray into psychoanalysis: 'He's not a modern neurotic,' he says of Odysseus. 'He's a simple, cunning and daring man.'¹⁷ By the end of the film, Paul comes to side with Lang, and—crucially—supplements Lang's rejection of psychoanalysis with an appeal to 'fidelity' to the source often employed by both practitioners and critics of adaptation. 'Mr Lang is right,' he tells Prokosch. 'Do Homer's *Odyssey* or don't do it at all.'¹⁸ The implicit endorsement of this position in

¹⁴ Aumont (1990); Bersani and Dutoit (2004) 18–73; Cerisuelo (1989) 81–97; Hayes (2004); Kinder (1981); Lombardo (2002); Marie (1986); (1995); Rakovsky, Zimmer, and Lefèvre (1991); Stam (2005b) 279–99; Vimenet (1991).

¹⁵ Moravia's novel is an illuminating intertext which provides us with a considerably more detailed examination of the process of filming Homer than that supplied by the film, and will be referred to in passing. Page numbers refer to the *New York Review of Books* edition, entitled *Contempt*. The characters have different names in the original: Paul and Camille Javal are Riccardo and Emilia Molteni. The director is Rheingold, and the producer is Battista.

¹⁶ The bibliography listed in n. 14 above provides ample discussion of this aspect of the narrative in novel and film.

¹⁷ This view is reflected in *Il Disprezzo*, except it is now the writer, Molteni, who objects to the director's 'moralising and psychologising', which, he says, debases Homer 'to the level of a modern play' (144). See also Bersani and Dutoit (2004) 29–31.

¹⁸ This line is taken directly from Moravia's novel, where Molteni states that 'as far as I'm concerned, one either does the *Odyssey* of Homer or else one doesn't do it at all' (206).

Moravia's novel (a result, perhaps, of the affinity between novelist and fictional writer)¹⁹ appears to carry through to the film, with Lang and Paul appearing as the most credible players in the production.²⁰ Indeed, striving for 'fidelity' may appear to be an admirable position from which to begin an adaptation of Homer, but it is also a theoretically and methodologically unrealistic one. Though this discussion need not repeat in detail the 'morally loaded' arguments against fidelity already established by adaptation critics,²¹ it is worth at least outlining the key debates in order to read them anew not only against Godard, but also against some of the findings of translation studies, so that we might begin to gain a deeper understanding of what is at stake in the adaptation–translation equation introduced in the last section.

The belief that a 'faithful' adaptation can—and must—be achieved supposes that there is an identifiable and fixed notion of precisely what the *Odyssey* of Homer *is* and what it *means*—that is, a reified object to be faithful to.²² This assertion, at odds with the move away from such essentializing claims in recent literary theory, is now fairly easily challenged. Godard's Lang seems to believe that there is a pure 'essence' of the Homeric text which can be conveyed on screen: but even if he could satisfactorily articulate this essential meaning (which he does not), this would be his own interpretation, as opposed to an objective statement of truth. In trying to convey this 'meaning', the process of his adaptation would thus be shaped by his own reading. It follows that another person's identification of what Homer's *Odyssey* 'means', even what it 'is', is likely to be different again. Robert Stam elucidates this problem particularly clearly:

'Fidelity discourse' relies on essentialist arguments in relation to both media [literature and film]. First, it assumes that a novel 'contains' an extractable 'essence', a kind of 'heart of the artichoke' hidden 'underneath' the surface details of style... But, in fact, there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can trigger a plethora of possible readings. An open structure, constantly reworked and reinterpreted by a boundless context, the text feeds on and is fed into an infinitely permutating intertext, seen through ever-shifting grids of interpretation.²³

If there are multiple interpretative possibilities, this also means, in a sense, that there are multiple 'versions' of the original—no *Homer's Odyssey* existing

¹⁹ Moravia himself worked as a screenwriter.

²⁰ This is an overly simplistic evaluation, to be sure—but, as many critics have noted, it is easy to read Lang here as the sage of early cinema, revered by Godard, whilst Paul's character also potentially resonates with Godard himself (wearing the same style of hat, for example).

²¹ See Leitch (2002); Stam (2005a) 14–16; Stam (2005b) 279. The citation is from Hutcheon (2006) 7.

²² Stam (2005a) 10.

²³ *Ibid.* 15.

'out there', but a multitude of *Odysseys*, configured at each individual moment of reception. The text—any text—only becomes reified at this moment of reading/interpretation, or, equally, in the process of adaptation of the text (itself constituting a reading by scriptwriter, producer, director, or whoever).²⁴ What is 'there' in the text is only what is 'found' there, and herein lies the fallacy at the heart of the rhetoric of fidelity. The process of reification at the heart of adaptation itself means that *you* get to (pre)determine (even if unconsciously) what it is you're apparently being faithful *to*.

So, if adaptation is a mode of interpretation, then there can surely be no 'right' adaptation to be privileged at the expense of others (even if some may be more convincing, or more appealing). The audience of *Le Mépris* may be directed towards praising Lang's adaptation as 'the right one', but though we may not *like* to read Homer as primarily a repository of spectacle—as the producer does—we cannot simply dismiss this reading. In fact, our privileging of some readings/adaptations over others is partly a result of our regard for Homer's 'classic' status, a topic to be addressed shortly.

At this point, we can return to our central theme and observe how neatly this debate maps onto a similar set of arguments made for the process of translation. As the study of translation has asserted itself as a serious academic pursuit in recent decades, one of the most important strands of discussion to have emerged concerns the extent to which translation is itself an interpretative act, shaped by external factors such as cultural and temporal location. Just as there can be no one 'correct' adaptation, so Susan Bassnett argues that 'it is pointless . . . to argue for a definitive translation, since translation is intimately tied up with the context in which it is made'.²⁵ Other theorists have emphasized how the instability of linguistic structures themselves, the 'uncontrollable polysemy' of language, make translation 'not simply . . . transformative of the foreign text but interrogative'.²⁶ Charles Martindale persuasively argues a similar point—that is, if translation is informed by the translator's situatedness, then it must be understood as an act of reading, where meaning is configured by the receiver at the moment of reception:

Discussions of translation usually assume that the meaning of the original is fixed, and that the translator's task is to reproduce it as far as possible in the target language; any argument is about the appropriate mode for so doing. But if meaning is not so fixed but constantly reconstructed, contextually and discursively, by communities of readers, then no translation, even an interlinear 'construing', is ever 'innocent', but always an act of interpretation, of rendering readable, which might involve (for example) foregrounding some elements and erasing others.²⁷

²⁴ Bersani and Dutoit (2004) 57–8.

²⁵ Bassnett (1991) 9.

²⁶ Venuti (2000) 218.

²⁷ Martindale (1993) 86.

Thus translation becomes an interpretative act, a way of *creating* meaning, just as I had suggested adaptation should be regarded. And with this emphasis on external factors (sometimes termed the ‘historical-descriptive approach’), argues Sandra Halverson, comes a displacement of ‘equivalence’ as a central concept in assessing translation.²⁸ This, we might tentatively suggest, is analogous to the rejection of ‘fidelity’ by adaptation theorists, in that both concepts, in simple terms at least, are concerned with the identification and transposition of an essential core of meaning, whether between languages or media.

Still, this does not allow us to see translation and adaptation as basically interchangeable synonyms. If we do substitute adaptation for translation in Martindale’s description, we must ask what ‘rendering readable’ might mean in film? What is the equivalent of the ‘target language’ now? We could simply say that the target language is now a target medium, cinema, and that the resulting adaptation need only render the source text legible in the terms of that new medium. We could even—as many film theorists do—talk about the cinematic product *as text*, focusing on the ‘literary’ elements of narrative and dialogue, referring to the visual aspects of editing, camerawork, and so on, as ‘film grammar’. But in so doing we ignore the fact that adaptation is (predominantly, though not exclusively) characterized by intermediality, in a way that translation typically is not. Each process may still be seen as existing on the same spectrum rather than being mutually exclusive: Roman Jakobson, for example, labelled three different kinds of translation—intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic—of which the third could equate to cinematic adaptation.²⁹ But more recently, theorists of translation in film in general have been careful to note the ‘particular semiotic nature of the total film sign’ as a means of signalling the complexities of film’s relationship with written text.³⁰ Godard himself remarked that ‘ce qui est filmé est automatiquement différent de ce qui est écrit, donc original’,³¹ and attached sufficient weight to this observation to have Lang paraphrase it (adapting *and* translating the utterance!) in the film. After viewing rushes, Prokosch complains that what is on screen is not what he’d read in the script. ‘Naturally,’ replies Lang, ‘because in the script it is written, and on the screen it is pictures.’³² This statement is

²⁸ Halverson (1997) 214–17.

²⁹ Jakobson (1959) 233. Though since Jakobson restricts this third category to the ‘interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of *nonverbal* sign systems’ (my italics), we should also allow that his first category (interpretation of verbal signs in the same language) *and* his second (interpretation in some other language) can describe the process too. Thus all aspects of translation, on this theory at least, fit all aspects of cinematic adaptation.

³⁰ Delabastita (1990) 101; Cattryse (1992) 16–17.

³¹ Marie (1995) 26.

³² The nature of Lang’s film puts a particular slant on this comment, since the rushes that we see apparently consist of nothing *but* pictures. Lang’s *Odyssey* could conceivably be a silent film,

largely a truism but it is worth lingering to consider how it usefully reflects back onto translation itself. Quite rightly, Godard notes that the filmed adaptation constitutes an original, but this is true not only of adaptation into a new medium: we can just as easily say that that which is *translated* is automatically different to that which is written (i.e. the source text), therefore original.

This brings us full circle to the conflict *within* the views on adaptation expressed by the director/writer figure. Whilst declaring the difference and originality inherent in the adaptation itself, still Godard (and Moravia) allow the wish to be expressed that some kind of fidelity ought to be aspired to, and achieved. However, I end this section by suggesting that we do *Le Mépris* in particular a disservice if we assume that Godard is wedded to this critically unsophisticated view. For in fact both film and novel undermine the tenability of the ‘fidelity theory’, albeit subtly, by concealing, withholding, or postponing the finished *Odyssey* film. In *Le Mépris*, we (the external audience, and presumably the internal one, too) see only fragments of Lang’s film. At the end, as he continues shooting after the producer’s death, we might assume that he is now making the ‘faithful’ adaptation of Homer that he has gestured to all along, but we cannot be sure what is happening.³³ In *Il Disprezzo*, the narrative does not even include the start of filming.³⁴ The ‘actual’ adaptation, on *any* terms—whether erotic spectacle or the putative ‘*Homer’s Odyssey*’—remains distanced, encouraging us to confront the fact that the rhetoric of fidelity may serve only to mask the unfeasibility of such a strategy for adaptation—and translation.

LE MÉPRIS AND (MIS)TRANSLATION

Having established that theories of translation can aid our understanding of adaptation in *Le Mépris*, this argument can be strengthened by pausing to consider the extent to which translation is itself implicated in every aspect of the film’s existence, from its very genesis to the exchange of dialogue between

like his early work; and if not, then the emphasis is still heavily on the visual—as it is often perceived to be in Godard’s work. But still, despite Lang/Godard’s comment, we cannot accept that either director privileges the image at the expense of the word, as the intricate interplay of dialogue (written and spoken) in *Le Mépris*, to be discussed in the next section, makes clear.

³³ Bersani and Dutoit (2004) 57.

³⁴ Thus ‘le roman d’un scénario devient le film d’un tournage’. Marie (1995) 30. Furthermore, the very nature of the novel ensures that the filmed *Odyssey*, as a *written* filmed *Odyssey*, is always at least one step removed from being a tangible, finished product—unlike Godard’s film, which at least lets us witness a version *as* a cinema audience.

its characters. In particular, I will argue that though the film seems only implicitly to undermine the usefulness of ‘fidelity’ in adaptation—as just discussed—its problematization of the principle in the act of *translation* is worked out more thoroughly. And if we accept that translation and adaptation can be understood as closely related, if not quite interchangeable processes, then it should follow that Godard’s comments on one may usefully reflect upon the other too.

The act of translation is integral to the life of Moravia’s novel, even before Godard conceives of his cinematic adaptation. There is no scope to examine here the Italian text’s translation into different languages, beyond brief consideration of one interesting aspect, the titling of the novel’s translations. Moravia’s original novel was entitled *Il Disprezzo*, but the English translation of 1955 (Secker & Warburg, trans. Angus Davidson 1955) was published as *A Ghost at Noon*—a reference to the apparition of Emilia which appears to Riccardo near the end of the novel. Godard’s film then translated the original title into French, hence *Le Mépris*, retaining *Il Disprezzo* for Italian release, and using *Contempt* in Anglophone markets. No doubt as a result of the film’s stature, recent editions of the novel in English use *Contempt*, thus returning, in a sense, to the title of the ‘original’ whilst simultaneously highlighting the interplay between text and film where, at different times and in different media, opinions over what constitutes an ‘equivalent’ title in translation or adaptation, have differed considerably. The linguistic choices in the matrix of *disprezzo/mépris/contempt* are thought-provoking—what does ‘contempt’ convey as an English rendering of the Italian? (Why, one might add, do I refer to the film by the French title when the English is used almost as frequently?) In addition, the choice of *A Ghost at Noon* invites comment. Does such a different title suggest that the English translator perceived his work as fundamentally different to the source text? Titles may be only a small aspect of a text, but nevertheless, as Shochat and Stam observe, they constitute ‘an especially privileged locus in the discursive chain of film. As hermeneutic pointers, titles promise, prefigure, orient.’³⁵ This importance is all the more acute if the work is inevitably compared to an earlier one, as translation or adaptation.

Besides titling, the performance of the film’s dialogue provides a sustained commentary on translation. French, Italian, German, and English are all spoken at various stages by different characters, and the film’s narrative discourse must continually negotiate the communication of meaning between people who do not understand each other’s language. This functions on two levels—the internal diegetic exchanges between the film’s characters, and the

³⁵ Shochat and Stam (1985) 43.

transmission of those exchanges to Godard's audience—neither of which function transparently. Conversation between the characters is generally channelled through Prokosch's assistant and interpreter, Francesca Vanini.³⁶ The astute viewer will notice that Francesca's translations do not always convey an utterance directly or comprehensively.³⁷ On Capri, when Paul tells Lang, Prokosch, and Camille why he is quitting the project in favour of writing for the theatre, only half of his speech is translated. Earlier, when Prokosch meets Paul at Cinecittà, he laments that a supermarket is to be built on the lot, 'my last kingdom'; instead of conveying this to Paul, Francesca observes 'C'est la fin du cinéma.'³⁸ To be sure, Francesca does not appear consciously to promote misunderstanding, but this last line is just one example of how her translation does constitute an interpretative rereading of the original utterance.³⁹ Moreover, though she may not *wilfully* impede communication, it is patently obvious that when she is not there as facilitator, the dynamics between characters become tense and stilted, as in the scene at Prokosch's villa when Camille's discontent begins to emerge.

Communication of the film's polyglot dialogue to its external audience is also problematized. Most audience members will understand at least one language spoken on screen, whilst needing translations of others, meaning the viewer himself must negotiate between listening to the dialogue and reading subtitles. For the most part, the subtitles are relatively direct translations—though of course, their very existence is a constant reminder of the inadequate fit between spoken film dialogue and written text, which often compels a filmmaker to employ dubbing (itself still problematic).⁴⁰ Godard resisted such moves, since the intricacies of the translation theme would obviously be invalidated.⁴¹ Nevertheless, DVD releases provide the opportunity to view the film with a dubbed soundtrack, which—in the English version at least—displays remarkable differences between the original and the dubbed translation.

³⁶ This character does not appear in the novel, and so Godard's invention of her for the purposes of the film is certainly suggestive of his commitment to exploring translation/adaptation in more depth. See Marie (1986) 35–6.

³⁷ Stam (2000) 62; Dwyer (2005) 298–9.

³⁸ Bersani and Dutoit (2004) 63 provide further examples.

³⁹ Similarly, later in this scene, Prokosch complains that because of Lang he's 'already lost the studio, now I'm going to lose my shirt'—which Francesca conveys with the more evaluative judgement, 'il va très mal'.

⁴⁰ Zatlin (2005) 123–49 provides a useful summary and bibliography of scholarship on titling and dubbing.

⁴¹ See Stam (2000) 62 and Dwyer (2005) 299 for Godard's rejection of the film's dubbed release in Italy.

Le Mépris's treatment of interlinguistic translation therefore serves to highlight the difficulty inherent in satisfactorily transferring meaning from one language to another. Thematically, this contributes to the film's concern with the communication barriers that potentially exist between everyone, even when speaking the same language. The difficulties that the international employees of Prokosch have is reflected, and made more urgent, by Paul and Camille's own communication problems—particularly in the central scene of their lengthy conversation in their apartment.⁴² But the film's translations also play out in such a way as to bring the process of adaptation into closer proximity, encouraging us to see the two as cognate. The flexibility of translation in *Le Mépris* and its source text(s), where titles change and translators reshape what they translate, makes it seem more like a process of *adaptation* than is often the case; and if the act of translation need not concern itself with 'fidelity', why should cinematic adaptation?

HOMER AS 'THE CLASSIC'

The discussion so far has tried to sketch out the reasons why, from an objective point of view, 'faithfulness' in translation and adaptation is an unreasonable aim; but still we cannot escape the fact that it is the status of Homer's *Odyssey* as a canonical text that makes the matter of adapting (and translating) it more complex, and all the more likely to seek refuge in the rhetoric of fidelity. Of course, the foundational, 'classic' status attributed to the Homeric epics is not itself a given;⁴³ but *Le Mépris* does seem to operate on this assumption, implying that Lang's and Paul's desire to be faithful to their exalted source is at least in part shaped by a notion of the *Odyssey* as a 'great' text.

The particular nature of the Homeric text's genesis, however, as a poem that developed from a shifting, flexible epic tradition, surely complicates the adaptation project even further by highlighting how tenuous any claims to fidelity must be, notwithstanding the theoretical problems already outlined. Of course, there is, and has been since antiquity, a more or less stable written text in existence—but just as all our different readings of that stable text constitute many different *Odysseys*, configured at the moment of reception, so we can go a step further and note that many different *Odysseys* existed even at the moment(s) of performance, in the intricate web of the oral epic

⁴² Rakovsky, Zimmer, and Lefèvre (1991) 61.

⁴³ See now various contributions to Porter (2006) for discussions of Homer's 'classic' status in antiquity.

tradition. Simultaneously, though, it may be these non-literary origins of the *Odyssey* that help strengthen the reverence with which it is accorded. It has been observed that all literature is translation on some level.⁴⁴ Thus, even when dealing with a ‘classic’, awareness of the work’s membership of a tradition (its self-conscious belatedness even), could conceivably lessen the anxiety of the translator or adapter. Why worry about tackling the *Aeneid* when Virgil so openly engages with his predecessors for his epic project? But it is harder to view Homer this way. The poem in its earliest form may be intangible as a literary object, but its aura of primacy is difficult to challenge, even when we remember the rich bardic culture to which Homer belonged.

On this view, the poet’s position on a high pedestal can seem unassailable and intimidating. But still, this fear engendered by Homer’s classic status must be countered by a recognition that the *Odyssey* is not *inherently* great, classic, canonical—it is constructed as such by the reading community over millennia. Though it may not always work this way in practice, any new reading, in the form of translation or adaptation, at least has the potential to obtain equal validity. This does not mean the critical consensus is always on the point of being overturned; on the contrary, a new reading is inevitably informed by that consensus—but it is not necessarily *restricted* by it. Alberto Moravia’s director, Rheingold, expresses this forcefully when Molteni, the writer, complains about the director’s psychological interpretation:

‘It seems to me,’ I protested, ‘that you’re blackening the character of Ulysses. In reality, in the *Odyssey*—’

But he interrupted me impatiently. ‘We’re not going to worry ourselves in the least about the *Odyssey*. Or rather, we’re going to interpret, to develop the *Odyssey*. We’re making a film, Molteni. The *Odyssey* is already written...the film is yet to be made!’ (186)

The film adaptation of Homer thus constitutes a new product—still an interpretation of Homer, as Rheingold says, but one that cannot be too beholden to the original if it is to function as a new product, and a new product in a new medium.

From another angle, though, this does not tell the whole story. The *Odyssey* is already written, yes, and the adaptation will be a new reading of it—but this statement glosses over that new reading’s ability to reach back in time and reconfigure the *Odyssey* itself. It may be ‘written’, but there is a sense in which it is also *rewritten* with each new response to it. This is particularly important for this discussion’s final point—the way in which, even though Homer’s

⁴⁴ See Bassnett (1991) 38 on Octavio Paz: ‘All texts, he claims, being part of a literary system descended from and related to other systems, are “translations of translations of translations.”’

classic status may make filming the text difficult, at the very same time it may be precisely that act of adaptation that enables the text's prominence as a classic. This proposition also turns the spotlight back onto the relationship between translation and adaptation. Undeniably, the translation of Homer from ancient Greek into modern languages has supported its position as a 'classic' text, as with other ancient texts.⁴⁵ Though it may be argued that translation is not a necessary precondition of classic status for much of an ancient text's modern incarnation, still, for Homer in particular, we can justifiably claim that translations of various kinds *have* had a crucial impact on the text's prominence, from the moment that the rhapsode's verbal performance was translated into written poetic discourse. Even in antiquity, Livius Andronicus' Latin *Odyssey* demonstrates the desirability, if not absolute necessity, of translation.⁴⁶

Bringing cinematic adaptation into alignment with literary translation adds more currency to this question. Translation, in the modern world at least, is clearly necessary to secure a readership for Homer—but is even that enough? We may wonder how many people will read the poem's translations, still more whether they accept these as justification of its 'classic' designation. Is it possible that in order to maintain an audience for the Homeric epic—and to validate its position as a classic—then it is now (cinematic) *adaptation* that must step in? If literary readers cannot be guaranteed, then the mass medium par excellence can do the job nicely, providing the necessary vehicle for reinvigorating the source text, and bringing this high-status literature to new and bigger audiences.⁴⁷ A real cinematic adaptation of the *Odyssey*, the 1955 *Ulysses*, provides a suggestive example here. At its conclusion, a title card proclaims, 'The dust of centuries has not dimmed the glories of Ulysses' heroic deeds . . . And the epic poem that Homer sang of the hero's wanderings and of his yearning for home will live for all time.' The epic is immortal, yes—but the implication is quite clearly that this is achieved in the present through the cinematic medium now *standing in for* the literary text (the act of replacement perhaps emphasized by the fact that the claim is presented onscreen *as text*). Admittedly, this line of argument implies that large audiences are part of what defines a classic, an easily challenged proposition. Why should fewer readers compromise Homer's classic status? Maybe it is the fact that he is *already* read by a comparatively small number of people that in some sense

⁴⁵ Lefevere (1998) is an important discussion of how translation enables and prolongs the 'cultural capital' of classic texts.

⁴⁶ Possanza (2004) 21–77.

⁴⁷ Sanders (2006) 8–9 and 24–5 observes that 'adaptation becomes a veritable marker of canonical status'.

guarantees his lofty position. This is an intractable question which it is not my intention to try and resolve; but the point is that cinematic adaptations of Homer—and of any similar texts—may now justifiably regard themselves as fulfilling the communicative role once occupied by translation.

The nature of cinema as a medium, in comparison with literary translation, then begs the question of whether it can be trusted as the ‘keeper of the flame’ in quite the same way. As Dwyer notes, cinema’s ‘mass cultural dimensions disturb notions of quality and cultural prestige’, thus potentially compromising its ability to engage with and support literary canons.⁴⁸ It is easy to say that cinema somehow cheapens Homer—but then this would be a gross oversimplification of the multifarious nature of cinematic production, ignoring the complexities of the industry presented to us by *Le Mépris*. If we doubt film’s capacity to ‘do justice to Homer’, we usually implicitly or explicitly invoke a particular kind of filmmaking, the big-budget, spectacular Hollywood approach. But this interested evaluation of cinematic production easily attracts the charge of elitism. A Hollywood Homer may be distasteful to many—but as suggested above, reading Homer as populist spectacle is not inherently invalid, and so neither can an adaptation on these grounds be hastily dismissed. Moreover, this position overlooks the fact that adaptation itself can help raise the esteem in which some forms of cinema are held, by using classic texts to ‘bestow authority’ on a newer medium (just as translation can enrich the target language).⁴⁹

It also follows that if we resist cinematic adaptation of Homeric epic because of our distaste for Hollywood production values—justified or not—we are forgetting how rigorously other cinematic industries reject the American hegemony. *Le Mépris* itself is clearly concerned with suggesting and privileging alternatives to the Hollywood approach to adaptation, reminding us that film is as multifarious as literature itself, and as such, no less equipped to read an ancient epic anew. It is also worthwhile acknowledging, at this point, Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit’s persuasive description of Godard’s use of cinema to present his own conception of the literary classic. His fragmented use of Homer, they suggest, alongside the frequent quotation of other ‘classics’ in his films (in *Le Mépris*, Dante, Hölderlin, and Corneille are all quoted by various characters), shows how ‘he destroys the text as monument. By citationally picking at literature, he demonumentalises it, therefore

⁴⁸ Dwyer (2005) 297. Not that textual translations of Homer would necessarily be exempt from such charges—if we imagine, for example, a colloquialized version, or, say, a graphic novel.

⁴⁹ Conversely, spectacular Hollywood cinema could itself be regarded as ‘classic’, by those who would reasonably argue that *this* kind of filmmaking is the most prestigious form of the cinematic art.

resurrecting it from the death of finished being, and allows it to circulate—unfinished, always being made—within the open time of film.⁵⁰ In this way, then, the act of quotation—itself mediated through translation and/or adaptation—perpetuates the view that to read is to interpret, to keep the text alive. And on Bersani and Dutoit's view, the director's fragmentation of the classic also suggests that remaking the text in this way is indicative of a certain lack of reverence towards its status as a classic.⁵¹

Godard, then, uses *Le Mépris* to provoke and tackle numerous questions about the afterlife of a Western literary classic, particularly in relation to the modern world's sense of responsibility to that text. Is it best served by reverent adulation or a spirit of creative flexibility? By what means can cinematic adaptation build on and work with the long precedents of literary translation in order to pursue one or both of these methods? The sophistication with which Godard deals with these issues no doubt contributes to *Le Mépris*'s own canonization as a classic in its genre, the French *nouvelle vague* (and, arguably, beyond).⁵² It is his commitment to exploring these issues that has made his film such rich and fascinating material for our own consideration of adapting and translating a 'classic'.

THE TRANSLATION/ADAPTATION ANALOGY: SOME CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the implications of equating translation and adaptation. Over the course of the discussion, we have seen how they can justifiably be regarded as analogous processes which share the

⁵⁰ Bersani and Dutoit (2004) 65. See also Hayes on 'The body and the book in *Contempt*': though this article contains limited commentary on the incorporation of classic texts in the film, Hayes's (2004) 35 examination of the many other literary props in the film does lead him to arrive at a conclusion similar to my own, that 'the different contexts in which it appears verify that a book's personal and social uses are not located in a specific work or text but in the person who reads or handles the book'.

⁵¹ This perhaps accounts for Nicholas Paige's (2004) 7 observation that Lang, though assumed to be the film's voice of truth, can equally seem to be at odds with the Godardian view: 'Lang, by announcing that he believes a faithful treatment of Homer's *Odyssey* to be possible, seems at odds with a film that insistently calls into question the possibility of any sort of cultural or historical translation.' Note once more the apparent ease with which 'translation' can be made to stand in for 'adaptation'.

⁵² Cerisuelo (1989) 81–5. An interesting related question is the extent to which *Le Mépris* acts as a commentary on classicism and modernism within film itself. Lang represents the bygone era of 'classical cinema' for which Paul feels nostalgic. Michel Marie (1986) 30 also observes that 'l'univers du cinéma classique est lui-même assimilé à l'univers mythifié de la civilisation grecque'. See also Coates (1998) 46–8.

same theoretical concerns, particularly in their move away from privileging 'fidelity', and in their framing as interpretative, culturally located acts. Claims to their theoretical similarities are reinforced when we consider the example of *Le Mépris*, a film which displays a committed and sophisticated exploration of both translation and adaptation. This dual thematic focus within one cinematic work allows us to test our hypothesis, with the result, I argued, that mapping one discourse to another proves both interesting and fruitful.

My initial suspicion, then, that it is dishonest and oversimplifying to use translation and adaptation somewhat interchangeably proves to be over-cautious. Though not synonymous, the two terms do form a critically productive partnership. There is, in fact, much to be gained from considering the two in tandem, so long as we recognize that framing adaptation as translation (and vice versa) should be used to *illuminate* the complexities of each, rather than elide them. By fully exploring this partnership in *Le Mépris*, the issues that confront translation of 'the classic' are shown to be inextricably and fascinatingly linked to those that confront adaptation of 'the classic'.

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II

The Survival of the Classic: Tracing the History of Translations

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Classical Translations of the Classics: The Dynamics of Literary Tradition in Retranslating Epic Poetry

Richard H. Armstrong

We often begin the history of literary translation with the rendering of Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin Saturnian verse in the third century BC by a Tarentine Greek, Livius Andronicus. This great founding act (or so we deem it in hindsight) puts translation at the heart of Roman culture, something singularly lacking in the standard scenario of ancient Greek literature.¹ By extension, this act also presents a paradigm for all subsequent cultures indebted to antiquity for the articulation of their national literatures, not least by underscoring the primacy of epic poetry in the hierarchy of genres and by inscribing it as the literal *incipit* for any robust literary culture. As Glenn Most puts it quite succinctly, 'The first line of Greek literature is the opening of Homer's *Iliad*; the first line of Latin literature is the opening of Livius Andronicus' translation of Homer's *Odyssey*.'² Homer and Livius are thus the twin foci of a literary system wherein we have both a true 'original' and an original act of translation, both a mysteriously given foundation and a conscious act of mediated founding that itself becomes a model for literary tradition. From this situation, Most extrapolates a cultural dynamic that constitutes our bifocal ancient heritage:

Thus, Greek literature, written by and for people largely uninterested in translations from other languages, was able to become an ideal source of texts for translations into other languages—but only by the mediation and upon the model of Latin literature,

¹ For a nuanced view of the inception of Roman literary culture, see Goldberg (2005), and for epic see Farrell (2005). There are many studies of Livius Andronicus—Verrusio (1942–77); Mariotti (1952); Broccia (1974); Goldberg (1993)—but the best place to start is Astrid Seele's (1995) 109–12 highly instructive survey of the classical scholarship, which shows how the lack of clear concepts and criteria concerning translation studies has made it possible to see Livius' *Odussia* in entirely contradictory ways, from slavishly faithful and crude to inspired, inventive, and poetical.

² Most (2003) 388.

written by and for people obsessed with translations from other languages, especially Greek. The Classical tradition needed two roots, distinct and complementary, one Greek, one Roman, if it was to flourish and grow.³

Though a mere shadow beside the colossus that is ‘Homer’, Livius’ act thus takes on a grand significance in the history of Western culture when he first dares to utter *Virum mihi, Camena, insece uersutum* (Tell me, Camena [i.e. Muse], of the clever man), drawing as much attention to the mediation as to the mediated.

As we rehearse this primal scene of translation, however, it is rarely mentioned that after the Roman poet Ennius (239–169 BC) effectively established dactylic hexameter as the dominant Latin medium of epic in the second century BC, someone *rewrote* Livius’ translation into hexameters (a text known only to specialists, which bears the quaintly descriptive title *Livius refictus*). It appears, then, that two versions of this foundational text were in circulation in later Roman times.⁴ For my purposes, this little-known fact is as important as the storied feat of primal translation, since it is the first documented instance in Western literature of how *changing conceptions of epic in the target culture alter the translational horizon*. Creative emulation, in other words, helps to shape the textual horizon on the original inspiring epic by reshaping the target culture’s expectations of epic within the burgeoning literary tradition. Thus Livius’ daring Saturnian venture was reworked in a later day into hexametric orthodoxy. From this simple fact we can draw a preliminary caveat for the history of translation: any facile mapping of the source-text/target-text relation that fails to consider the evolving target culture’s conceptualization of the genre makes a very thin description of the phenomenon.

Fundamentally, the case of Homeric epic shows us that there is a complex interaction between translation and the evolving native genre of epic poetry, one where the introduction of Homer in translation stimulates aspirations to that genre. Native products born of such aspiration can then in turn shift the acceptability of the previous translation(s) and necessitate *retranslation* in order to reshape Homer along the lines of current literary norms. This act of retranslation, then, is itself a realignment of a literary genealogy, a desire to connect the newest literary norms to the numinous source and origin of epic discourse, to reappropriate an authoritative ‘classic’ of the genre under the sign of *difference* from the previous translation(s) and literary norms. It thus

³ Most (2003) 389.

⁴ Courtney (1993) 45–6. The remains of the *Livius refictus* consist of four citations from the grammatical authority Priscian. Courtney (46) notes (following Timpanaro) that the grammarians Charisius and Festus take pains to refer to Livius’ original translation as the *Odyssia uetus*.

proves to be both deferential and differential at the same time, instantiating a tradition even as it represses specific predecessors. But even such acts of differential retranslation do not fully control the play of genealogical manoeuvres, since the writer/translator's act is not the sole locus of culture; there are also others involved in the process of canon-formation and publication who can structure the literary world. An older translation can itself become a 'classic' text in its own right, a permanent fixture in the evolving constellation of texts that make up the current literary milieu—or, to use Itamar Even-Zohar's more formalist terminology, the literary 'polysystem'.⁵

Thus not only is the translational act caught up in the polysystem of the target culture's synchronic literary world, but also the translational *series* begins to constitute its own system, variously advanced by authors, critics, booksellers, teachers, librarians, and readers at large. A trip to any local Barnes & Noble Bookstore in the US will present one with a shelf of 'classic' Homers, Englished variously by Chapman, Pope, Butler, Lattimore, and Fitzgerald, who are given stiff competition by the newcomers Fagles and Lombardo, and perhaps even a few new unknown contenders. While such a wealth of retranslation is not the typical situation for literary translation overall, it is a very relevant phenomenon for the topic of translating the classics into English, where it is fair to say we have an embarrassment of considerable riches. And since the retranslation of epic has often been a bellwether for literary discussion, we might say that the study of epic retranslation, though not representative of the standard process, often represents quite well the changing literary norms and environment of many target cultures, especially given the enormous effort it requires and the kind of person it attracts. Epic retranslation certainly provides us with one feature that is highly favourable to any kind of evolutionary study: a rapid generation rate. Indeed, the very fact that retranslation occurs at a spate and frequency not explicable by mere necessity helps us to highlight the purely literary issues that have set its inflationary spiral in motion. The emulative poetics that engenders the native epic in the target culture also fires the translators, such that, as we can see in English from 1660 onwards, 'a new rendering of a major classical work, far from discouraging further attempts, is often followed by several more', though you may never hear of many of them.⁶ While a suitable translation of a minor classic—say, of Statius or Silius Italicus—is truly a literary service, it would

⁵ The polysystem, to use a textbook definition, 'is conceived as a heterogeneous, hierarchized conglomerate (or system) of systems which interact to bring about an ongoing, dynamic process of evolution within the polysystem as a whole', Baker (1998) 176. Even-Zohar (1990) 9–13 discusses his terminology specifically. Besides Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, André Lefevere's (1992) linking of translation with rewriting is also quite pertinent to this discussion.

⁶ Gillespie and Hopkins (2005) 130.

seem that, judging from history, a retranslation of Homer or Virgil is a literary gauntlet thrown down in public—an open challenge to all comers and a pointed criticism of all goners.

In this sense, then, the study of epic retranslation in the West can often serve as the royal road to understanding the cultural politics and dynamics in a given age.⁷ Since Roman poets initiated this process, we shall pay them considerable attention here, taking into account A. J. Boyle's strong claim that 'As it reveals itself as both index and critique of the foundational culture of the western world, and as demonstrably (through its transmutation into medieval and Renaissance Latin epic and their vernacular generic and non-generic successors) one of Europe's most persistent and determined poetic modes, Roman epic lays claim to being western civilization's prime literary form.'⁸

Epic retranslation, as I have said, implies there is a vertical relation to be considered, not just the horizontal source-text/target-text relation we typically envision when we think of translation. This vertical relation comprises a diachronic dimension, i.e. the series of previous translations, some of which, like our Chapman and Pope, constitute literary 'classics' in their own right. Yet we know that to become a classic of this kind, a translation needs to be more than just a representation of a classic text. It is a curious fact that while a foreign literary classic may have considerable staying power in a host culture—and such is undeniably the case for Homer in many European countries—many translations of this same text prove ephemeral at best, thus never obtaining the title 'classic' for themselves by osmosis. On the other hand, a translation might hold its own for many years for reasons that have less to do with the prestigious source text than the circumstances of its composition and/or circulation (e.g. the fame of the translator, the easy availability of the translation for mass reproduction, the convenience of its abridgement, the hallowed norm of its diction or verse form even when it is recognized to be a poor translation). Hence, what makes a translation classic is often different from what makes the source text a classic in the literary canon. I think it is fair to say that we are only now beginning to read the translational series with the same acumen that we have applied to general literary history in the past, and I hope here to lead towards an understanding of how retranslation powerfully constitutes and captures traditions that are well worth studying in detail, not as a world apart, but rather as another face of the literary world. In its vertical and horizontal orientations, it is inherently Janus-faced, looking both to the past and the present.

⁷ Even when translations of Homer appear in the non-Western world, they can still spark interesting debate and similarly reflect central cultural concerns, as has been shown recently with the appearance of Ahmed Etman's translation of the *Iliad* into Arabic. See Rakha (2004).

⁸ Boyle (1993) 10.

What I am working towards is not just the usual discussion of the various strategies adopted to translate the august artefacts of the epic genre, but also the conditions that create the rich possibilities of a classic translation, one that shows the ‘maturity’ T. S. Eliot took as the byword of the classic.⁹ For a classic translation of a classic epic text is inherently an archival performance of the target culture, one that reinscribes the literary history and norms of the target culture onto the originating space of epic.¹⁰ The individual value of such reinscriptions changes over time, but the simultaneous prestige and permeability of epic to various kinds of discursive appropriation sustain the importance of the process itself. For epic contains within it a whole encyclopedia of genres and repertoires deceptively linked by the formal unity of the verse, which lie like virgin timber to the ambitious translator.¹¹ William Cowper certainly acknowledged the embarrassing variety of tone in Homer when he complained, ‘It is difficult to kill a sheep with dignity in a modern language, to flay and to prepare it for the table, detailing every circumstance of the process.’¹² Yet in Homer’s case, the very antiquity of the text and the mystery of its authorship seem to invite the translators to make strong their claims and stylings; it is a bold frontier. It was no coincidence that Keats, upon breathing Homer’s ‘pure serene’ through the thundering fourteeners of Chapman, was driven to think of the conquistadors. Borges once remarked that the present state of Homer’s text ‘resembles a complex equation that delineates precise relations among unknown quantities. What a treasure trove for the translator!’¹³

While the full exploration of epic retranslation is well beyond the scope of this chapter, we can at least initiate the journey by a return to Rome, not merely because the history of Homeric translation begins there. Rome is unusual in that a remarkable consensus was arrived at early on as to the verse form of epic poetry, which remained the dactylic hexameter for centuries, strongly modelled on the Homeric poems. This apparent formal unity, however, contains within it considerable variation in detail, as we shall see. But while Rome is in a sense the prime paradigm for the translation of epic—since

⁹ Eliot (1945/74) 10.

¹⁰ Throughout here, I expand upon ideas first made public in a previous article; see Armstrong (2005), which discusses how translational modelling affects outcomes in the translation of epic.

¹¹ As the multifarious Englishings of Homer illustrate, epic *can* be conceived as multivocal and stylistically varied, in spite of the forced characterization of epic as having a single and unified world-view for the sake of differentiating it from the novel (this is Bakhtin’s terrible oversimplification). As Boyle (1993) 3 comments, ‘The impetus towards epic form could sometimes be, and after Virgil increasingly was, an impetus to reform the implicitly celebratory values of the form itself.’ On the challenge of Homer’s ‘universe of discourse’, see Lefevere (1992), ch. 7.

¹² Cowper (1791/1837) p. xvii.

¹³ Borges (1932/92) 1137.

no other society has so perfectly absorbed the poetics of Greek epic—it is also a considerable anomaly, since it appears never to have produced a lasting, authoritative translation, at least one that has something of the presence of Pope’s Homer in English or Voss’s in German. And yet the language of Rome became the prime membrane through which Homer and the very idea of epic poetry passed over to Europe’s vernacular cultures. So I wish to illustrate in this chapter something that rather complicates Glenn Most’s dictum about the bifocality of the classical tradition. While it is true the Latin model of emulative poetics and adopted hexametric epic was essential in relaying the literary norms of Greece to European culture, the full impact of this Latin mentality for effective translations would only be truly realized much later in those vernacular cultures. In this uncanny ‘deferred action’ of the Latin literary milieu, we can see the continuing vibrancy of the classical tradition as a bifocal enterprise.

ALTER HOMERUS: ROMAN EPIC AND IMPLICIT TRANSLATION

Since Livius Andronicus is so often used to paint the primal scene for literary translation, as I said, we ought to use the case of Latin epic first of all as the paradigm for the cross-fertilization of the evolving task of native epic alongside the work of translation. In both instances we can see not just an imitative, but also an emulative poetics in operation. Not only were the Romans the first to engage in this activity in a way that could become a model for other cultures,¹⁴ they also have given us the very concept of a ‘classic text’—a text written, in the words of Aulus Gellius, by a *classicus assiduusque aliquis scriptor, non proletarius* ‘a first-class, responsible (i.e., tax-paying) author, not some low-class type’.¹⁵ In a painfully Roman way, the language of classicism is originally a description of class struggle, one that rings true enough for the displacement of the Tarentine freedman Livius by the freeborn Calabrian Ennius, whose hexametric epic supplanted Livius’ humble firstfruits in Saturnian metre.¹⁶ Livius had previously inspired another poet with his Saturnian *Odussia*, the Campanian Gnaeus Naevius (c.264–194 BC), who

¹⁴ I add the proviso of serving as a model because historically, the Romans were not the first to translate epic poetry; there are Hittite and Hurrian translations of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, but they cannot be said to serve as a model for the literary polysystems of Western Europe.

¹⁵ Borges (1932/92) 1137. On the evolution of the term, see the discussion in Curtius (1948/73), ch. 14 and especially Citroni (2006).

¹⁶ On Ennius’ social status, see Goldberg (1995) 115.

innovatively turned Roman history into epic verse with his Saturnian *Bellum Punicum*, celebrating the recent Roman victory in the First Punic War. When Ennius came along, he thus built upon an established foundation that coupled traditional mythological epic with Roman history, but he radically regrounded it by a return to more stringent Greek literary norms. The repercussions of Ennius' introduction of dactylic hexameter were so powerful that it worked retroactively, reshaping Livius' pre-existing translation of Homer as we have seen. It also worked definitively for future literary production, effectively killing Saturnian metre once and for all for both native Roman epic and Roman translations of Greek epic. This situation in the Latin language lasted for many centuries, well beyond the Roman period. To draw up a similar scenario in English, one would have to imagine that Milton's blank verse form of epic caught on so well after the publication of *Paradise Lost* that the heroic couplet disappeared, that the translations of Dryden and Pope never existed, and that our English Homers are essentially variations on William Cowper's high-Miltonic version. No other type of Homer in poetry or prose would exist.

But the *Annales* did more than establish a particular metre; it also introduced a more daring form of appropriation of Homeric language by translating far more literally the peculiar phraseology of Homeric diction and by giving rein to a kind of creative *Kunstsprache* that could take its own course in Roman poetry. A good case in point is the Ennian phrase *dia dearum*, a very literal rendering (almost a transliteration) of the common Homeric phrase $\delta\lambda\alpha\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\omega\nu$ (bright/glorious among goddesses), which Ennius coined by resurrecting the adjective *dius* (from **diuios*, 'of the sky') to mean at times 'descended of the gods' (said of Ilia at *Annales* 60 and Romulus at 106 [Skutsch]), but used here to reflect more generally the broader associations of the Homeric $\delta\acute{\iota}\omega\varsigma$.¹⁷ In a sense, the phrase shows a remarkable conservatism, dredging up from the linguistic archive of Latin a cognate that will better approximate the source-text phrase. But we must also see it as an *innovation*, for this conservative phraseology is being put to the radical end of a new poem based on Roman history, and the phrase itself released new creative possibilities in poetic diction that led to similar implicit superlative phrases in the *Annales*, such as *pulcra dearum* (beautiful among goddesses, l. 15), *sancta dearum* (holy among goddesses, l. 53), *magna dearum* (great among goddesses, l. 445)—phrases, it bears mentioning, that do not occur in Homeric

¹⁷ See Skutsch (1985) 177, 210–11. The adjective $\delta\acute{\iota}\omega\varsigma$ is used widely in Homer as an epithet of general commendation. When predicated of men, it can mean 'noble, illustrious, goodly'; when said of women it can mean 'queenly, outstanding'; concerning horses it can mean 'well-bred, excellent'; and when said of cities, it means 'famed, rich'.

Greek.¹⁸ Once this diction is put in the stream of the Latin polysystem, it spawns further variations at the hands of later epic poets (cf. Virgil's *dia Camilla* at *Aeneid* 11. 657, or *sancte deorum* at 4. 576), who thus innovate and venerate at the same time. By the age of Nero, we might even surmise that the adjective *dius* had come to smack too much of poetic preciousness when Persius satirizes pretentious Romans who request a recitation by some poetaster:

... ecce inter pocula quaerunt
 Romidulae satiri, quid *dia poemata* narrent.
 ... And lo! The well-stuffed scions of Romulus
 ask mid-binge what *divine poesy* has to say.¹⁹

There are many such instances of phrasal translation in Ennius and other Roman poets, but one could also look to larger units of analysis, such as entire similes.²⁰ The simile itself is prime Homeric stock, and a certain recurring one merits close analysis, as it was adapted by both Ennius (535–9 [Skutsch]) and Virgil (*Aeneid* 11. 492–7), and had even been adapted in Greek before them in the third century BC by Apollonius (*Argonautica* 3. 1259–62). It is Homer's comparison of a warrior (Paris at *Iliad* 6. 506–11, Hector at 15. 263–8) to a high-spirited horse cutting loose upon the plain, and as Ennius' version survives almost intact, it is worth comparing the texts here.

ὡς δ' ὅτε τις στατὸς ἵππος ἀκοστήσας ἐπὶ φάτῃ
 δεσμὸν ἀπορρήξας θείῃ πεδίῳ κροαίνων
 εἰωθὸς λούεσθαι ἑὺρρείος ποταμοῖο
 κυδίων· ὑψοῦ δὲ κάρη ἔχει ἀμφὶ δὲ χαῖται
 ὦμοις ἀΐσσονται· ὁ δ' ἀγλαΐῃφι πεποιθὸς
 ῥίμφα ἐ γούνα φέρει μετὰ τ' ἦθεα καὶ νομὸν ἵππων

Lattimore translates this as:

As when some stalled horse who has been corn-fed at the manger
 breaking free of his rope gallops over the plain in thunder
 to his accustomed bathing place in a sweet-running river
 and in the pride of his strength holds high his head, and the mane floats
 over his shoulders; sure of his glorious strength, the quick knees
 carry him to the loved places and the pasture of horses;²¹

¹⁸ The closest one gets to such terms in the extant corpus of Homeric verse is the unique expression *πότνα θεάων* (mistress of the gods) in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter (2. 118), which, assuming it is not some hoary Mycenaean survival, can easily be seen as operating on the same principle of variation as Ennius' inventions.

¹⁹ *Satires* 1. 30–1; my emphasis.

²⁰ For further examination of Ennius' Homeric borrowings, see Ronconi (1973) 19–23.

²¹ Lattimore (1951/61) 6. 506–11.

Though the context is unknown, we have the following verses from Ennius, thanks to the chattering pedants of Macrobius' *Saturnalia* (6. 3. 8):

*Et tum, sicut equos qui de praesepibus fartus
Vincla suis magnis animis abrumpit et inde
Fert sese campi per caerula laetaque prata
Celso pectore; saepe iubam quassat simul altam,
Spiritus ex anima calida spumas agit albas.*

Which can be Englished a bit straightforwardly as:

And then, like a horse who, stuffed at the stable
breaks the bonds with his great spirit [*suis magnis animis*] and then
bears himself away through the blue-green, fertile stretches of field
with a proud heart; often he tosses his mane up high,
while his breath [*spiritus*] born of his hot temper [*anima*] flings out white foam.²²

The two passages are so close that we can certainly say Ennius took more than the mere idea of the comparison from Homer; he is effectively translating it. Particular things are not taken over, either because they have no Latin equivalent (Skutsch claims this for *στατός* 'stalled, stabled')²³ or because Ennius sensed they did not serve the comparison (why bring up bathing in the river and accustomed haunts of horses?). There is indeed a stylistic issue here that the Greeks themselves had advanced in the Hellenistic period, when the insistence on more precise comparison in similes reigned.²⁴ In support of this we can cite the fact that Apollonius in his adaptation of the simile cuts it by half, and even the ancient scholiasts thought that the simile worked for Paris (very much the prancing stallion) but not well at all for Hector, to whom it is later applied in a very dissimilar situation (*Iliad* 15. 263–8).²⁵ It should

²² I follow here parts of Warmington's translation from the Loeb edition. There is some difficulty with the last line as to *spiritus* and *anima*; Gordon Williams (1968) 695 translates it as 'his snorting blows out white foam on his hot breath', which may not adequately account for *ex anima calida*.

²³ Skutsch (1985) 684.

²⁴ See *ibid.* 685; von Albrecht (1969).

²⁵ Note that Apollonius redraws the terms of the comparison to be more exact, following closely the Hellenistic criticism of Homer (*Argonautica* 3. 1259–61): *ὥς δ' ὄτ' ἀρήμιος ἵππος ἐελλόμενος πολέμοιο | σκαρθμῶ ἐπιχρεμέθων κρούει πέδον, ἀπτὰρ ὕπερθεν | κυδιόων ὀρθοῖσιν ἐπ' οὐασιν ἀγχέν' ἀείρει* (as when a warhorse eager for battle | stamps the plain with a leap while neighing, and | exulting lifts up his neck with ears erect). (Not all of Apollonius' similes achieve this; see discussion in Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 103–4). The scholia on *Iliad* 6 argue that the simile is largely appropriate for Paris in this case, since the stallion's mane is his pride and Paris has a fine head of hair (*καὶ Πάρις δὲ εὐκομος*; Erbse (1971) 2. 217, ΣbT ad 6. 509) and the comparison is appropriate for a dandy (*πρεπόντως ἐπὶ τοῦ καλλωπιστοῦ*, ΣbT ad 6. 510). The A scholia on 15. 265–8 report that the last four lines were athetized by Aristarchus as being inappropriate to Hector, who has just recovered from being struck by Ajax with a rock, while

also be noted that stylistic reduction is not an uncommon feature of Homeric translation to this day (i.e. omission of epithets, circumstantial participles, or difficult/mysterious adjectives). There is also a degree of explicit temporal ordering added (*et inde*—unless we take *inde* in a spatial sense, to mean ‘thence’ not ‘then’) and a reduction in the use of participles (e.g. ‘having broken’ becomes ‘who breaks’). It must be admitted that Homer has not helped his translators at all by heaping up *five* participles in the first sentence, which even the more literal Lattimore deftly disguises. This syntactical clarification, when put together with the omission of seemingly pointless detail, can be interpreted as a ‘correction’ or improvement upon the original.²⁶ At the same time he thus reduces, however, Ennius also intensifies his target text, for example, by replacing—perhaps by linguistic necessity—the oddly precise *ἀκοστήσας* (lit. barleyed or corned) with the more exaggerated *fartus* (‘stuffed’, though Skutsch ingeniously suggests the word came to him ‘by association of sound when he thought of *far* [spelt] as a translation of *ἀκοστή*’).²⁷ Homer did not care how the horse broke free, but Ennius tells us it is through its great spirit and vital energy (*suis magnis animis*). And, although Ennius will have none of the bathing in the sweet-running river nor the stamping upon the plain, he does give us blue-green, fertile stretches of field where Homer thought one word sufficient (*πεδίοιο*, ground, plain). While this sudden generosity of adjectives might seem gratuitous, the actual scansion of the line begins to gallop smartly right where these words appear, as spondees give way to dactyls, and this effect certainly serves his purpose.²⁸

Certain other intensifications seem to address the anomalous language deployed here in Homer’s simile. A Roman would be hard put to render *κυδιόων* (glorying, exulting) as anything other than *glorians*, *superbiens*, or *triumphans*, which are inherently anthropocentric, since the Greek verb is derived from *κῦδος* (honour, glory, renown) and is only applied to an animal

266–8 were omitted entirely by Zenodotus (in the Teubner edn. ed. M. L. West, lines 15. 266–8 are now bracketed). Eustathius defends the reappearance of the simile in book 15 as being merely descriptive of Hector’s swiftness (1015. 30–1). Janko (1992) 256 argues sensibly, ‘if we lacked book 6, nobody would criticize this simile’, and that neither context can be seen as ‘original’. D. Porter (1972) treats the general problem of violent juxtapositions in similes, here relevant to the stallion’s reappearance in *Iliad* 15. For a general discussion of the scholiasts’ interpretation of similes, see Snipes (1988); on the possibility that the scholia influenced Virgil’s interpretation of the passage, see Schmidt-Neuerburg (1999) 181–91; Schlunk (1974) 29–30.

²⁶ So Seele (1995) 66–8.

²⁷ Skutsch (1985) 685.

²⁸ Lattimore, in fact, intensifies *θείη πεδίοιο κροαίνων* way too much, according to Kirk (1990) 226, who suggests simply ‘runs with stamping feet’. As for the rhythmic effect of Ennius’ galloping *caerula laetaque prata*, it should be noted that in the Homeric passage the dactylic hexameter is intercalated with spondees until the final line, which gallops considerably more apace: *ρίμφα ἐ γούνα φέρει μετὰ τ’ ἦθεα καὶ νομὸν ἵππων*.

in this one simile. The description of the horse holding its head high and letting its mane flow down can be taken as a specification of just how a stallion can be said to exult.²⁹ But note that Ennius has diplomatically avoided the extension of *κῦδος* to a horse by concretizing its feeling of personal glory in the physical description *celso pectore* (lit. with chest held high), something one can easily picture of a proud stallion.³⁰ He seems to have taken this physicalizing strategy a step further by adding the un-Homeric foaming at the mouth, a feature that re-emphasizes the horse's proud spirit as it stems *ex anima calida* (from his hot temper) (remember *suīs magnis animis*), but Ennius focuses it on a physical and uniquely animal manifestation.³¹ It seems telling that he completely avoids Homer's *ὁ δ' ἀγλαΐηφι πεποιθώς* (trusting in his beauty/splendour), another psychological description that has much in common with *κνυδιόων* (in fact, the nouns *κῦδος* and *ἀγλαΐη* are deployed in tandem as virtual synonyms at *Odyssey* 15. 78). Note by comparison how Lattimore has paraphrased these expressions in order to spin them towards a credibly animal emotion: *κνυδιόων* is 'in the pride of this strength', while *ὁ δ' ἀγλαΐηφι πεποιθώς* is 'sure of his glorious strength'. In contrast, Robert Fagles fully allows the psychologizing with 'thundering in his pride' and 'sure and sleek in his glory'.³²

In sum, caught in the warp and woof of Ennius' fragments, we see a strategy of epic composition that adheres to a dynamic emulative poetics, one that ranges from outright translation and appropriation as in this simile, to a more original and deviational tendency to push the epic tradition towards new territory that reflects a new world order; namely, the rise of Roman imperial power in the wake of the Second Punic War. This fusion of the old poetic voice with a new direction has been aptly named 'integrative allusion' by Gian Biagio Conte.³³ Even Ennius' pointed divergence is sanctioned by a clever deployment of tradition; he makes himself out to be an *alter Homerus* by claiming to be Homer *reborn* through transmigration of souls (also a native Italian tradition, as it was a Pythagorean doctrine). The poem began with the recounting of a dream in which the poet encounters Homer himself, who,

²⁹ Such is the interpretation of Eustathius, who takes the physical description to be the explanation of *κνυδιόων* (658. 64).

³⁰ Von Albrecht (1969) 338 rightly observes, 'Bei Homer ist das Seelische patizipial der Hauptbewegung zugeordnet, bei Ennius nominal verselbständigt.'

³¹ The trouble is we don't know to whom this simile applies; Williams (1968) 695 assumes that Ennius' shifting away from the notion of pride has to do with a desire to remove 'all sense of the effeminate.' But it is not clear how originally the simile contained anything necessarily effeminate about it. It does clearly shift towards the description of high-spiritedness, however.

³² 6. 607–8.

³³ Conte (1986) 67.

after disclosing some of life's general principles, informs him that his soul has transmigrated from a peacock into the body of Ennius. The importance of this dream cannot be understated, as it shows the full ambition of Ennius to refound the epic tradition: 'he is not Homer, the creator of a tradition, but Homer reincarnate, the adaptor of that tradition to a new Roman context'³⁴ (George Chapman would later claim a similar situation in order to boost the authority of his translations.³⁵) This radical gesture says a lot about the positioning of the epic poet *vis-à-vis* his predecessors in Latin, Livius and Naevius, to whose idiom he refers somewhat disparagingly when he speaks of others who wrote *uorsibus quos olim Faunei uatesque canebant* (in verses which fauns and seers were wont to sing).³⁶

This discussion of Roman epic's salad days moves us towards an understanding of Roman literary culture as one rife with 'implicit translation', to use García Yebra's term, which sounds a bit less sinister than the equally viable term 'covert translation'.³⁷ Implicit translation means in this instance that the literary culture assumes or draws from a knowledge of a Greek source text, which may not even be the source for the given Roman work's theme or plot, but *is* the source of style and literary conventions. In this way, as García Yebra puts it, 'one can say without exaggeration that a large part of Latin literature shines, like the moon, with reflected light; it is a massive adaptation—at times brilliant—of Greek literature'.³⁸ Thus, it is the Romans who teach us that a source text can be the source of many things, and that translation often impinges upon issues we normally range more generally under intertextuality. The Roman scenario requires us, then, to adopt more sophisticated ways of dealing with translation as a complex form of rewriting, as André Lefevere advocated.³⁹ It also requires us to fuse the study of translation with the analysis of literary adaptation and allusion that has been highly developed for some time now by scholars of Roman poetry.⁴⁰

³⁴ Dominik (1993) 41. Peter Aicher (1989) 230 goes even further to suggest that Ennius used metempsychosis to suggest that 'the language barrier is an illusion', a defensive means of excusing the 'strange Greekness of style' that was bound to shock at first. He thus introduced a kind of oneiric ambience that enabled him to do considerable creative violence to the literary idiom of the time, but ostensibly just to channel and continue an older tradition.

³⁵ In a fairly obscure allegorical poem titled '*Euthymiae Ratus*, or the Tears of Peace' (1609), Chapman describes an encounter with the ghost of Homer, who claims that he had filled Chapman's bosom 'with such a flood of soul' that 'thou didst inherit | My true sense, for the time then, in my spirit; | And I invisibly went prompting thee | To those fair greens where thou didst English me' (lines 78, 83–5; cited in Underwood (1998) 1).

³⁶ *Annales* 207 [Skutsch].

³⁷ García Yebra (1983/89) 308.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Lefevere (1992).

⁴⁰ e.g. Williams (1968); Conte (1986); Martindale (1993).

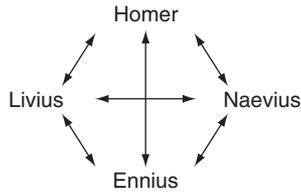


Figure 8.1. *Rota Enni* or the wheel of Ennius.

Most importantly, the early scenario of Roman epic shows us the cross-fertilization of translation and creative composition as the literary milieu unfolds in its formative stage (though this will continue for centuries in Latin and thus cannot be dismissed as a neophytic strategy). Livius established a paradigm of epic appropriation through translation, which in turn inspired Naevius to venture a Saturnian epic poem on the glories of Rome's victory in the first Punic War; Ennius repeats Naevius' gambit but re-grounds the game by a stricter appropriation of Greek models, a move that not only reconfigures the position of Greek literature in Roman culture, but inherently passes judgement on Livius and Naevius. We can diagram this set of relations as a sort of *rota Enni* or 'wheel of Ennius' as in Fig. 8.1.

The double arrows signify that these relations are always two-sided in literary history, since Ennius' revalidation of Homer restructures the presence of the Homeric poems within the Roman literary tradition, while his critical judgement of Livius and Naevius similarly shifts away from established literary norms even as his espousal of historical epic reaffirms them. As far as the hexametrical form of Roman epic goes, Ennius' formal revolution was permanent.

By the time we get to the Augustan poets of Rome, we see a culture with a sufficiently dense literary corpus that it has acquired its own 'classics' in a sense, and Livius' poem, though clearly not having anywhere near the status of Homer or even Ennius, has achieved the classroom canonization that keeps it on the cultural map.⁴¹ So Horace recalls having Livius' *carmina* dictated to him as a boy by his teacher, Orbilius, 'the Whacker [*plagosus*]'.⁴² But while Horace gives us a sense at least of how Rome has consciously constituted its muster-roll of literary tradition from the days of Livius, he does so in order to criticize the vulgar notion that anything old is a flawless masterpiece. *Naevius in manibus non est et mentibus haeret | paene recens? adeo sanctum est uetus omne poema* (Isn't Naevius ready to hand and clinging to our minds almost like yesterday? So revered is every ancient poem), *Epistles* 2. 1. 53–4. The fact that he feels

⁴¹ On the formation of the Roman literary canon, see Citroni (2006).

⁴² *Epistles* 2. 1. 69–71.

compelled to plead for a space for more recent poetry in the *Epistles* shows something of the accretive force of literary tradition by 30 BC, but also displays a truly critical sense of the dynamics of tradition, which cannot, as the poet believes, rely blindly on venerated relics at the expense of creativity.

Moreover, among the Augustans we can see the dynamic of emulative poetics is very much the order of the day in the ongoing epic game, as when Virgil revisits the simile of the horse ‘after Ennius after Homer’, where the pointed differences with Ennius are often clear rapprochements with Homer.⁴³ This time it is Turnus who is being described as he comes down fully armed from the citadel.

*qualis ubi abruptis fugit praesepia uinclis
tandem liber equus, campoque potitus aperto
aut ille in pastus armentaue tendit equarum
aut adsuetus aquae perfundi flumine noto
emicat, arrectisque fremitu ceruicibus alte
luxurians luduntque iubae per colla, per armos*⁴⁴.

As when a stallion breaks his bonds and flees the stall free at last, and gaining the open field either heads towards the pastures and herds of mares or accustomed to bathe in the water of a familiar stream, dashes out [or ‘shines forth’, *emicat*], neighs with his neck raised high, frisking about, and his mane plays over his neck, his shoulders.

His *tandem liber equus* (stallion free at last) is more explicitly freed from the bonds and the stall than in Homer, and Virgil has dropped the gratuitous detail of his being well fed. He puts back the bathing in the stream and the pastures of horses, but rationalizes them by putting them together as open options (*aut... aut*, ‘either...or’) for him to entertain in his newfound freedom, whereas in Homer their relation was syntactically far looser. Virgil also changes slightly the Homeric reference to the ‘haunts and field of horses’ by making it specifically the haunts of *mares*, injecting a sexual element that would prove irresistible to later translators (for which, see below).⁴⁵ Ennius

⁴³ Further instances of comparison between Virgil and Ennius in relation to Homer are discussed in Aicher (1990). Almost any study of Virgil examines his adaptations of Homer, but see especially Heinze (1929/93); Knauer (1964/79) and (1964/90); and Grandsen (1984). Schlunk (1974) and Schmidt-Neuerburg (1999) examine his possible use of the scholia to interpret Homer.

⁴⁴ *Aeneid* 11. 492–97.

⁴⁵ There is no suggestion in the ancient scholia that ἵππων must mean ‘mares’, for which Homer does have the precise expression θήλειας ἵππους at *Iliad* 5. 269. This would seem to be a Virgilian innovation. One could argue that it does not fit the situation in *Iliad* 6, since Paris is leaving Helen (the exegetical scholia go so far as to specify, ‘the tether of Alexander [Paris] is Helen’ (Σ bT *ad* 6. 507)). One possible influence of the ancient scholia on Virgil not noted by

had intensified the horse's excitement through having it foam at the mouth, while Virgil adds neighing and the highly animal *luxurians* (frisking about), which plays alliteratively well against *luduntque iubae*. Note that *luxurians* also avoids the human psychological associations of Homer's *κυδιόων* (glorying), whose metrical position it occupies, and that overall he uses more objective than psychological descriptions. For example, he uses the word *emicat*, which can mean both 'dashes forth' and 'shines forth', to capture the horse's objective dash and splendour in a manner that reflects Turnus' appearance in his golden panoply (11. 490—*fulgebatque alta decurrens aureus arce*, lit. 'and he shined forth golden as he ran down from the high citadel'). He thus sidesteps Homer's inherently psychological and self-referential phrase *ὁ δ' ἀγλαΐῃφι πεποιθώς* (trusting in his beauty).

Not only is this a rendering of Homer against the background of Ennius (for like Ennius' stallion, Turnus *exsultat... animis* (prances spiritedly), 11. 491), we can also see how Virgil inscribes Apollonius into this version, who was first to have the horse neigh and lift his neck on high (*Argonautica* 3. 1260–1: *σκαρθμῶ ἐπιχρεμέθων κρούει πέδον, αὐτὰρ ὕπερθεν κυδιόων ὀρθοῖσιν ἐπ' οὐασιν ἀχέειν* ([the warhorse] stamps the plain with a leap while neighing, and | exulting lifts up his neck with ears erect)). This kind of archival recomposition has the unfortunate name of *contaminatio* in Latin, as if Apollonius pollutes Virgil's Homer.⁴⁶ But Conte's term of 'integrative allusion' is a far better descriptor of this amalgamating process, a process that does not worry about sullyng primeval literary purities, but rather retains, transforms, and reflects upon them through emulative enactment. Such a poetics, Conte maintains, does not lessen the power of art in the mind of the poet.

Schmidt-Neuerburg (1999) or Schlunk (1974—he discusses the relevant scholia on pp. 27–8 but does not make the connection) involves *campoque potitus aperto* (having gained the open plain) (11. 493), which occupies the place of *θείη πεδίοιο κροαίνων* (runs clattering through the plain). As the earliest scholia attest, *κροαίνων* was not entirely understood in antiquity, and some authors, including the poet Archilochus, apparently thought it meant 'desiring, yearning for' (*ἐπιθυμῶν*), thus construing *πεδίοιο* as an objective genitive (i.e. the horse 'runs yearning for the plain'—see *Σ A ad 6. 507*, also *Σ T ad 15. 264*). This is an understandable solution, because apart from the obscure word, the line was noted for the anomaly of *πεδίοιο* hanging out there in the genitive with no preposition governing it (see *Σ A ad 6. 507*, which says the verse was marked with a *diplē* sign in ancient editions since the preposition *διὰ* (through) was left out). If this solution was still suggested in his day, Virgil needed only to make a minor shift from 'yearning for' to 'having gained' (a shift from an intention to its fulfilment) to arrive at *campoque potitus aperto*, which itself reinforces his *tandem liber equus* (stallion free at last) in the line above.

⁴⁶ The term *contaminatio* originally refers to the importation of scenes from different plays in making Roman adaptations of Greek drama (Terence, *Andria* 16). The term is inherently accusatory in origin and thus can be misleading.

On the contrary, it means that he claims to know it through and through, with an awareness that elevates him above individual literary achievements—which he knows how to master and identify—while the price paid for this freedom is his subjection to the *idea of poetry*. It increases his infatuation with conscious knowledge of the poetic act and with his own freedom and power in achieving it. This complex awareness is the ideological hinterland behind Alexandrian poetry and behind much Latin poetry. One result is that poetry is no longer exclusively—or, sometimes even mainly—of work of art but is also a process.⁴⁷

My plea here is for us to focus on this process of emulative re-enactment as we attempt to grasp the dynamic and far-reaching consequences of the Roman tradition of epic translation and emulation.

ROME AND EXPLICIT TRANSLATION

Hexametric epic, in spite of many innovations in theme and style, still held together after Ennius as a master-genre and identifiable literary repertoire that lived well past the Roman era and into the Middle Ages and Renaissance. But what of explicit translations of Greek epic in the Roman period? Here, too, the dactylic hexameter metre held fast, but it is remarkable that what can be said of translations of Homer is highly limited because they survive largely in the scantiest remains. These are mostly individual verses cited by a later grammarian or other pedant for the sake of a lexical archaeopteryx contained there, and this doubtless skews the evidence towards unrepresentative lines. It would seem, however, that Ennius had given impetus for a vogue of translational activity, though we must be cautious when drawing any conclusions from such fragmentary remains. In the age of Sulla (c.138–78 BC), we know a certain Cnaeus Matius produced a Latin *Iliad*, and what survives of it can be traced to specific Homeric verses (not always the case with Livius Andronicus). Another *Ilias* is attested for one Ninnius Crassus, about whom nothing is known, but it is assumed he flourished in the post-Ennian, pre-Virgilian era.⁴⁸ We similarly assume Livius's *Odussia* was recast into hexameters around this time.

Though the evidence is slim, there appears in the case of Cnaeus Matius a similar translational poetic at work that deploys intensification and abridgement somewhat in the manner of Ennius. For example, in fr. 1 we have the verse describing Hera's pity for the dying Greeks at *Iliad* 1.56 (κῆδετο γὰρ

⁴⁷ Conte (1986) 63; original emphasis.

⁴⁸ So Goldberg (1995) 135.

Δαναῶν, ὅτι ῥα θνήσκοντας ὀράτο (for she pitied the Danaans when she saw them dying): *corpora Graiorum maerebat mandier igni* (she grieved that the bodies of Greeks were chewed by the fire). The verse is cited by the scholar Varro (*De lingua latina* 7.95) for the archaic passive verb form *mandier* (to be chewed), and contains a rather vivid expression that is indeed found in Homer—but once only at *Iliad* 23. 182 (πῦρ ἐσθίει, the fire feeds on), as Achilles addresses Patroclus. Courtney also suggests this verse ‘glances at’ *Iliad* 1. 52 (πυρὰ νεκρῶν καίοντο θαμειαί, (the numerous corpse pyres burned)), in which case we see a melding of verses and an intensification of the outrage, as the fire ‘chews’ the bodies like a ravenous beast⁴⁹. It also contains splendid alliterations worthy of Ennius himself.

There is also an interesting instance in Matius when a Roman deity seems to have replaced the vague and hard-to-translate Homeric δαίμων (divinity) in a verse that must refer to *Iliad* 7. 291–2 or 396–7 (εἰς ὃ κε δαίμων ἄμμε διακρίνη, δῶν δ’ ἐτέροισί γε νίκην, until the divinity| chooses between us and gives one or the other the victory). The verse is Matius fr. 3: *dum dat uincendi praepes Victoria palmam* (until swift/propitious Victory gives the palm for winning), which—aside from its Ennian alliterations—contains what Courtney terms ‘a post-Homeric and statuesque conception of Victory, who is not a deity at all in Homer’.⁵⁰ This shift displays the larger process of cultural translation that required the general identification of Greek deities with Roman ones, a process Livius’ very first line from the *Odussia* had begun when he replaced the Greek muse with the native Italian *Camena*. It bears remembering that this process of Romanizing names stayed in place for many centuries and passed into vernacular translations; it is still in effect in every translation that features Achilles instead of Akhilleus.

As tantalizing as it might be to imagine a post-Ennian vogue of translation based on these fragments, the fact remains that no complete translation survives, nor do these texts seem to have made much of an impact on the general literary scene. Horace, for example, remembers Livius from his schooldays, but while Livius, Naevius, and Ennius figure in his gallery of hoary literary worthies, there is no mention of Matius or Ninnius Crassus, which is itself telling. We know of one other apparent translation of the *Iliad*

⁴⁹ Courtney (1993) 99.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 100. The one use of νίκη in Homer that comes near this shows that victory does not act like a divine being, but more like an elusive object of desire. Paris says to Hector at 6. 339 νίκη δ’ ἐπαμείβεται ἄνδρας (victory shifts back and forth between men). The first personification of Nike would seem to be Hesiod, *Theogony* 384, where she is a daughter of Styx and Pallas, sister of Zelos, Kratos, and Bie (Rivalry, Strength, and Force), but the tradition of the visual arts might be a far greater influence on Matius than any literary source. As Traina (1970) 108–9 notes, the notion of awarding the *palm* of victory is particularly post-Homeric, not attested at Rome until after 293 BC according to Livy (10. 47. 3).

by a certain Attius Labeo from the time of Nero precisely because the satirist Persius singled it out for ridicule (*Satires* 1. 4–5, 50).⁵¹ But it seems very damning that the only mention made of these Roman Homers, beyond the specimen-collecting of later pedants, is criticism and abuse; there is no Roman poem titled, ‘On First Looking into Livius’ (or Matius’ or Labeo’s) Homer’. While we usually assume that the real cause of this weakness on the translational front was the pervasive bilingualism of the literary elite, it would be rash to conclude that no Roman poet ever had recourse to translations in reading Homer.⁵² After all, even Greeks had to make use of Homeric scholia and lexicons—such as the one attributed to Apollonius the Sophist⁵³—and literary papyri survive from the third through sixth centuries AD that show in the East, at least, Greeks had homely trots from which to learn their Virgil.⁵⁴

We can, however, say something about the post-Ennian culture of translation from another perspective, since Cicero (106–43 BC) readily translates the relevant passages of Homer in his philosophical essays, and in them we see a solid commitment to the hexametrical model.⁵⁵ Cicero did *not*, however, commit to a complete explicit translation of either Homeric epic, though he did attempt one of the astronomical poems of Aratus, the *Phaenomena*.⁵⁶ He also composed epic verse on the life of the general and politician Gaius Marius and, to his later embarrassment, on his own consulship. As such, Cicero figures as a poet/translator, one who continues the ongoing composition of epic

⁵¹ The *Commentum Cornuti*, which dates from the ninth or tenth century AD, glosses these verses of Persius to say that Attius Labeo translated both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, *uerbum ex uerbo ridiculose satis, quod uerba potius quam sensum secutus est* (word for word quite ridiculously, as he followed the words rather than the sense: (2004) 5). At 1. 50 the commentator further explains that he was a *poeta indoctus temporum illorum qui Iliadem Homeri uersibus foedissime composuit ita ut nec ipse se postea intellexisset nisi elleboro purgaretur* (an ignorant poet of those days who composed a version of Homer’s *Iliad* so very badly that he could not understand himself unless purged with hellebore [a proverbial treatment for the insane]), *ibid.* 22. The single surviving line, *crudum manduces Priamum Priamique pisinnos* (you would munch Priam raw and Priam’s kids as well) (= *Iliad* 4. 35) shows an appalling inattention to linguistic register, particularly given Roman epic’s tendency to raise the tone; see Courtney (1993) 350.

⁵² Thus I cannot agree with such broad pronouncements as Lockwood’s (1918) 116 ‘the practical need for translations which confronts the modern world did not then exist’. Possanza (2004) 63–4 sensibly distinguishes between the ‘ideal reader’ of a Latin translation (such as that of Aratus’ *Phaenomena* by Cicero), who would be perfectly conversant with the original, and the actual readership at large. Cicero’s own errors in understanding Aratus’ epic dialect show his fluency in the Greek of his day did not guarantee he was a faultless reader of literary Greek.

⁵³ Haslam 1994a, b.

⁵⁴ See Gaebel (1969/70); texts in Cavaiale (1958) 8–36.

⁵⁵ For good discussion of Cicero’s translations, see Traina (1970) 55–99; Ronconi (1973), ch. 3; and Goldberg (1995) 136–45; the Latin texts are conveniently collected in Blänsdorf (1995) 161–6.

⁵⁶ The fragments are presented in Soubiran (1993) and studied by Possanza (2004), whose detailed comparison between the translational techniques of Cicero and Germanicus is superb and enlightening. Also on the translations of Aratus, see Bellandi, Berti, and Ciappi (2001).

while also engaging in translation. A contemporary of his did so as well, Publius Terentius Varro of Atax (82–c.35 BC), who freely translated Apollonius' post-Homeric epic *Argonautica* and Aratus' *Phaenomena*,⁵⁷ and composed a poem on Julius Caesar's war with the Sequani in Gaul. So in the late Republic, at least, the combination of explicit translation and epic composition certainly is attested, showing an ongoing synergy between the two activities, even if these authors were shy of taking on all of Homer.⁵⁸

It is a solid fact, though, that Homer's pervasive and exalted influence in Roman epic is better represented in the works of his imitators and rivals than in the work of any extant translation. The only *Ilias Latina* to come down from antiquity is a highly abridged poem that is as much a literary *jeu d'esprit* as it is an attempted compendious translation. It is ascribed by modern scholars to Baebius Italicus, and appears to have been composed during the Trojan frenzy of Nero's court. Nero himself composed a *Troica* on the burning of Troy (it is thought that his recitations of the poem are the basis for the rumour that he sang the *Capture of Troy* during the great fire of AD 64⁵⁹), and in addition to the *Ilias Latina*, we know of the *Ilias* of Attius Labeo mentioned above, the lost *Iliacon* of the poet Lucan (Statius, *Silvae* 2. 7. 55), and the *Fall of Troy* inserted in the *Satyricon* (89). Nero's reign gave impetus to both historical and mythological epic; besides Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, begun while he was still in Nero's favour, Silius Italicus, author of the Flavian epic *Punica*, and probably also Valerius Flaccus, author of the *Argonautica*, grew to maturity in Neronian Rome. Thus it makes sense that, like the *Iliads* born in the wake of Ennius, this era too should have produced Latin Homers.⁶⁰

The *Ilias Latina*, however, illustrates a condition of Latin verse translation that will prove to be lasting. It begins credibly enough as a literary translation that shows interesting use of equivalent effects, such as the functional replacement of epithets. Take, for example, the line *sceptriger Atrides et bello clarus Achilles* (sceptre-bearing Atrides and Achilles, renowned in war) (8) for *Iliad* 1. 7: *Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς* (Atrides king of men and noble Achilles). The Latin verse adapts epithets used elsewhere in Homer (*σκηπτουῦχος* (sceptre-bearing), *δουρικλυτός* (spear-famed)) to fit in this particular line, showing a fairly sophisticated awareness that this maintains the epic style in spite of the semantic difference. However, as one reads on, the poem falls by necessity into more verse summary than translation, since it is only one-twenty-fourth the length of the Homeric original. As Marco Scaffai's exhaustive study of

⁵⁷ See texts in Blänsdorf (1995) 229–34.

⁵⁸ Cnaeus Matius is known to have written *mimiambi*, but it is not clear whether they are adaptations of Herondas or originals following in his footsteps.

⁵⁹ Griffin (1984) 151. ⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 153.

the text shows, the *Ilias Latina* draws as much from Virgil and Ovid as it does from Homer, so much so that the work resembles at times a *cento* or patchwork of classic Roman lines.⁶¹ Here a young, mediocre poet who is steeped in a target-culture tradition effectively lets the hexameter form guide his selective rendering of Homer on a kind of autopilot. So powerful is the Latin epic tradition by this time that Virgil and Ovid's voices prove hard to ignore in rendering Homer's. Indeed, in translating Poseidon's prophecy concerning Aeneas' future rule over the Trojans (20. 300–8), Baebius shows his Virgilian colours by alluding to the clear continuity between the action in the *Iliad* and the current political regime, the Julio-Claudian dynasty (a gesture that is crucial for dating the work, in fact, since the dynasty ends with the death of Nero in AD 68):

Quem [sc. Aeneas] nisi seruasset magnarum rector aquarum
 ut profugus laetis Troiam repararet in aruis
 Augustumque genus claris submitteret astris,
 non clarae gentis nobis mansisset origo. (899–902)

Whom [i.e. Aeneas], if the ruler of the great waters had not saved
 so that he as a refugee might refound Troy in fertile fields [i.e. of Italy]
 and put forth the *Augustan lineage* for the glorious stars,
 the *originator of that illustrious line* [the *gens Iulia*]
 would not have survived *for us*. (my emphasis)

It is sad that this work effectively *was* Homer for the Latin Middle Ages, all of Homer that Dante would have been able to read; yet it too found its translators, such as the Spanish poet Juan de Mena (1411–56), who must hang all his praise and respect for Homer on the tiny nail of this text.⁶² Homer comes crawling back into the mainstream of Latin literary culture only through the inglorious word-for-word translations of Leonzio Pilato, composed during 1358–62.⁶³ This was the first of a number of close Latin translations that would mediate Homer's presence to vernacular cultures, particularly in the age of printing, which allowed for wide diffusion. While it can be argued that this new cult of the literal was a result of the long reflections occasioned by biblical translation, it was equally clear that, while necessary, such an approach was embarrassing to the Latin-literate public.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Scaffai (1982) 67.

⁶² In his proem, de Mena tells Juan II of Castile that he offers him flowers from the garden of Homer, 'monarcha de la universal poesía' (1519/1949) 35. It is also interesting to note his metaphor for the loss of quality as the poetry passes from Greek into Latin and then into the vernacular. He says this is like what happens to the sweet, delicious fruits of the end of summer that are damaged in the first rain and ruined by the second, *ibid.* 36.

⁶³ Pertusi (1964).

⁶⁴ The ancient tradition of literal translation is well studied in Brock (1979), and it existed in schools in the East for the study of Latin literature, as Gaebel (1969/70) shows (for papyri

Hence the dressing-up of Pilato's homely work into oratorical prose in 1439 by Pier Candido Decembrio in texts that went rapidly from Latin into Castilian and other vernacular languages.⁶⁵ The recourse to prose translation of Homer might seem a real innovation of the humanists—it was practised by such eminent men as Lorenzo Valla (c.1406–57)—but it would be wrong to assume it meant a greater concern for accuracy. This vogue of translation *more oratorio* was more a convergence of models and goals, wedding the Ciceronian linguistic fashion with the humanist culture's prosaic, rhetorical mindset. Valla was quite adamant about the need to redress the text in finer Latin figures and to vie openly with the Greek original.⁶⁶

Verse translation into Latin was a far more daunting task for the humanists, and the poet/translators faced the same quandary that had so coloured the *Ilias Latina* centuries before, only now exacerbated by Latin's status as being no one's native language (though to be honest, having Latin as a second language did not hinder Livius Andronicus or the trilingual Ennius). When the young Angelo Poliziano (1454–94) began his translations into verse in 1470, what came out initially was so profoundly Virgilian that it does indeed appear to be a Virgilian riff, if not a genuine Virgilian *cento*.⁶⁷ The translation by Helius Eobanus Hessus (1488–1540), often cited by Chapman, at times marks its Virgilian and Ovidian borrowings with pride (i.e. printing *Vergilianum* in the margin). We must not interpret this situation as one of a mere lack of inventiveness or poetic energy, however. Given the fact that many in the Renaissance felt Virgil had substantially improved on Homer (as Vida thought, *particularly* in regards to similes), a Virgilian rendering of Homer into Latin would seem perfectly just, a proper adjustment to target norms we would say today.⁶⁸ Thus Eobanus renders Homer's simple word *hippos* (horse) in the simile cited above with the Virgilian metonym *sonipes* (Virgil thought *equus* good enough!), 'loud-hoof'. What we observe here among the Latin humanists is as much a conflict of competing classicisms as it is the impasse of an ossified poetic idiom that can only receive the epic *Urtext* into

containing literal translations of Virgil, see Cavenaile (1958) 8–36). However, even Jerome, who famously maintained that the very word order of the Bible was a mystery to be retained, was against the notion of translating Homer literally (*Chronicon*, praefatio).

⁶⁵ Serés (1997).

⁶⁶ Rocco (2000) 23–4.

⁶⁷ As Rubenstien (1983) 66–7 notes, the latter books of Poliziano's translation more effectively escape the Virgilian mould, but are worse translations for all their originality and greater accuracy. She surmises it was because Poliziano began to take the meaning of Homer more seriously, under the influence of Neoplatonic views of the text (68–70), and had evolved a more eclectic model of Latin verse style.

⁶⁸ For Vida's criticism of Homeric similes vs. Virgilian, see *De arte poetica* 2. 286–303 (1527/1976) 62–3.

the ready-made vessels of its imitators. Virgilian epic verse, as Alessandra Rocco says, was both a deterrent and an inevitable font of imitation/inspiration for the rendering of Homer into Latin verse, and here the irony of *deterrence* is well worth contemplating.⁶⁹ Latin literature suffered from its very success at acquiring the epic idiom.

THE ENGLISH CLASSICS

This story does not terminate at the ‘dead end’ of Neo-Latin translations of Homer; actually, the project I am proposing *only begins* here, which is to show how our ‘classic’ translations of Homer in English hang very much on the Latin tradition in a manner that is thoroughly interwoven with its techniques and concerns, and especially with the integrative allusion and emulative poetics that shaped Roman culture. The best way for me to show this in brief compass is simply to revisit the simile of the stallion in the versions of Chapman (1611), Dryden (1697), Pope (1715–20), and Cowper (1791), to show the accretive force this translational series reveals and the depth of its involvement with an already-ancient tradition of translation and interpretation.

George Chapman was quite thoroughly dependent on the Latin humanistic tradition of Valla, Eobanus, and especially Spondanus, or Jean de Sponde (1557–95), author of his commentated edition, which contained a translation originally by Andreas Divus and revised by Spondanus himself. Chapman relied so much on these Latin authors, in fact, that an opponent whom he memorably called ‘an envious Windfucker’ (a kind of kestrel) accused him of merely translating from Latin, and not from the Greek original.⁷⁰ It is revealing, however, that Chapman saw no trouble in openly signalling Virgil’s imitation of this passage in his *Iliads*. A comment printed in the margin says: ‘His simile, high and expressive, which Virgil almost word for word hath translated’.⁷¹ Moreover, he also incorporates Virgil’s interpretation right into his own remarkable version.

And as a faire Steed, proud
With ful-given mangers, *long tied up and now* (his head-stall broke)
He breakes from stable, runnes the field and with an ample stroke
Measures the center, *neighs* and lifts aloft his wanton head,

⁶⁹ Rocco (2000) 27.

⁷⁰ See ‘Preface to the Reader’ (1611/1956) 17–18. On Chapman and continental humanism, see Fay (1951), Sühnel (1958), and Phinney (1965).

⁷¹ Chapman (1611/1956) 151.

About his shoulders shakes his Crest, and where he hath bene fed
 Or in some calme fload washt or (stung with his high plight) he flies
Amongst his femals, strength puts forth, his beautie beautifies,
 And like Life's mirror beares his gate—so Paris from the towre
 Of loftie Pergamus came forth; he shewed a sun-like powre [...] ⁷²

As my italics indicate, Virgil is being imitated here alongside Homer. Homer's 'stalled horse' is 'long tied up and now [...] He breakes from stable,' which reflects Virgil's *tandem liber equus* that *abruptis fugit praesepia uinclis*. He also neighs like the horse of Apollonius and Virgil, and like Virgil's, flies specifically to the females (or more conveniently, *his* females). That this was a conscious choice on Chapman's part can be shown by the fact that the literal Spondanus had translated line 6. 511 as *facile ipsum genua ferunt ad loca consueta & pascua equorum* (easily his knees bear him off to his accustomed places and the pastures of horses [masculine plural]); Eobanus, however, in both his renderings of the simile referred to the horses as mares (*equarum*). Chapman thus had to take sides, and did so in line with Virgil. We can see, then, how much the Latin poetic tradition still stands between the English reader and Homer at this point in the translational series.

Chapman had a mind of his own, however. He intensified the passage at far greater length, a condition one can say is often imposed by the format of rhyming couplets, though it must also be observed that the fourteener is a long and sagging line that often needs filler. His steed 'runs the field *with an ample stroke*', he '*measures the center*', he is '*stung with his high plight*' in a manner that suggests sexual tension—none of which comes from Homer. Rather than merely trusting in his beauty, this steed puts forth his strength, beautifies his beauty (a consequence of his putting forth his strength?), and becomes the image of Life and vitality itself, a principle dear to Renaissance aesthetics.⁷³ Chapman is also quite aware of the inherent problem of the simile's later repetition in book 15, and omits it entirely in his translation there, though Spondanus had argued for its inclusion in his commentary, and Eobanus had kept it in his translation with some minor variation.

What this suggests is that Chapman draws no slavish attitude of imitation from his Latin *auctores*; rather, he steps into a role that is *authoritative* towards the source text on the model of his Latin predecessors. On the one hand, he can read Homer only in the light of the Latin tradition and defers to the latter quite often with approval; but on the other hand, he clearly feels empowered to follow his own (considerable) fancy by its example. He is quite resoundingly clear about this foundation for his studied freedoms.

⁷² Ibid. 151–2; my emphasis.

⁷³ Hazard (1975).

What fault is it in me to furnish and adorne my verse (being his Translator) with translating and adding the truth and fulnesse of his conceit, it being as like to passe my reader [i.e. be accepted by him] as his, and therefore necessarie? If it be no fault in me, but fit, then may I justly be said to better Homer? Or not to have all my invention, matter and forme from him, though a little I enlarge his forme? Virgil in all places where he is compared and preferred to Homer, doth nothing more.⁷⁴

We find in another place that Chapman makes a strikingly passive-aggressive characterization of himself as a translator working in a great and long tradition, which includes Virgil.

Especially since Virgil hath nothing of his owne, but onely elocution—his invention, matter and forme being all Homer's, which laid by a man, that which he addeth is onelie the worke of a woman, to netife and polish. Nor do I, alas! but the foremost ranke of the most ancient and best learned that ever were, come to the field for Homer, hiding all other poets under his ensigne. Hate not me, then, but them, to whome, before my booke, I referre you.⁷⁵

On the one hand, he deflates the rewriter's role as being that of one who merely neatens up and polishes, like a tidy housewife. In this manner, he invokes Virgil at the same time he seems to cut him down to size *vis-à-vis* the manly Homer. On the other hand, he takes valiantly to the field and marshals 'all other poets' under the bard's ensign, fighting vigorously on the cultural front lines by championing Homer through his own creativity as a poetic translator. Indeed, it is precisely because of the Roman perspective on Homer that Chapman is able to articulate so well the creative impulse in translation. We find no such ruminations in the great, foundational translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by Arthur Golding (1536–1606) from 1567, a work that, though very thoroughly Englished, never attempts the flights of Chapman's fancy. I interpret this difference between Chapman's Homer and Golding's Ovid as something far more than one of poetic temperament; it seems rather to reveal the higher stakes and emulative verve of the Homeric challenge, as well as the fact that Chapman was already consciously engaged in *retranslation*, while Golding was not.⁷⁶ Though we might like to make Chapman our Livius Andronicus, the fact is he cannot be, since English literary tastes were certainly well advanced by 1611 and the literary perspective on Homer many centuries old by then. Effectively this means that for English culture, there is

⁷⁴ Chapman (1611/1956) 296.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 69.

⁷⁶ In Golding's dedicatory letter to Robert, Earl of Leicester, he commends him for supporting those who show 'zeal and desire to enrich their native language with things not heretofore published in the same' (1567/2001) 3. From this, then, it seems he was unaware of the complete translation of the *Metamorphoses* by William Caxton from 1480, which remained only in manuscript.

no Homer without (first!) Virgil, one of the parallactic consequences of literary tradition.

It is accordingly important to take a look next at John Dryden's version of Virgil's horse simile, in part because it bears an important influence on Pope's Homer as we shall see, but also because it shows the remarkable verve of the translational series when it comes to epic. For Dryden is as fearless as Chapman when it comes to filling out the source text's conceits.

Freed from his Keepers, thus, with broken Reins,
The wanton Courser prances o'er the Plains,
Or in the Pride of Youth o'erleaps the mounds,
And snuffs the Females in forbidden Grounds,
Or seeks his wat'ring in the well-known Flood,
To quench his Thirst and cool his fiery Blood:
He swims luxuriant, in the liquid Plain,
And o'er his Shoulder flows his waving Mane:
He neighs, he snorts, he bears his Head on high;
Before his ample Chest the frothy Waters fly. (1. 41–2)

Dryden gives ten lines (five complete couplets) for Virgil's six, and clearly increases the sexual element. He is a 'wanton' courser in the 'pride of youth' who hops the mounds and 'snuffs the females in *forbidden* grounds', and must 'cool his fiery blood'. The image of the swimming horse is maintained and expanded, and Dryden indulges in a flagrant Latinism that manages to capture Virgil's original alliteration: 'He swims *luxuriant* in the *liquid plain*' (for *luxurians luduntque iubae per colla, per armos*). But there is another Latinism afoot here that takes us to another level of complexity. 'Liquid plain' is itself a Latinate trope for water, rendered by Latin poets with *aequor* or even *campus*; but this particular English phrase was coined by Dryden's predecessor George Sandys (1578–1644) in his influential translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1632). The passage in Ovid concerns the creation of the world, and describes how rivers come to empty themselves into the sea:⁷⁷

*in mare perueniunt partim campoque recepta
liberioris aquae pro ripis litora pulsant*
The rest, their streams into Ocean poure;
When, *in that liquid Plaine*, with freer wave,
The foemie Cliffes, in stead of Banks, they lave;⁷⁸

Thus it seems we get a real glimpse of the carnivalization of literary tradition here with this Ovidianization of Virgil, through Dryden's homage to (or theft of) the work of Sandys. If we wish to frolic further in this carnival, we might

⁷⁷ Dryden (1697/1987) 744.

⁷⁸ Sandys (1632/1970) 26.

also see that, consciously or not, Ennius has reappeared in the ‘frothy Waters’, which echo the *spumas albas* rising from the stallion’s breath, or in the ‘ample chest’ that recalls the *celso pectore*, symbol of his proud nature. Indeed, with all his fiery blood and pride of youth, Dryden’s is a very Ennian stallion, who breaks his tether *suis magnis animis*.

Alexander Pope showed more restraint than Dryden when he in turn came to translate the passage from *Iliad* 6 (there are slight variations in its reappearance in book 15).⁷⁹ But it is important to note the echoes of Dryden, which suggest the latter’s Virgil still finds itself inscribed upon Homer.

The wanton courser thus with reins unbound
Breaks from his stall, and beats the trembling ground;
Pamper’d and proud, he seeks the wonted tides,
And laves, in height of blood, his shining sides;
His head now freed, he tosses to the skies;
His mane dishevell’d o’er his shoulders flies;
He snuffs the females in the distant plain,
And springs, exulting, to his fields again.⁸⁰

Pope here gives eight lines for Homer’s six, not surprisingly given the inevitable expansion that rhyming can induce. The ‘wanton courser’, ‘in height of blood’, and most especially ‘He snuffs the females in the distant plain’ are clear echoes of Dryden, though ‘distant plain’ shows more restraint than ‘forbidden grounds’. ‘Breaks from his stall’, however, and ‘his head now freed’ seem rather to refer to Virgil’s text directly (*abruptis fugit praesapia uinclis, tandem liber*) or through Chapman’s Homer. When the simile reappears in book 15, Pope’s variation on this translation is quite flagrant in its echoes of both Chapman and Dryden: ‘With ample strokes he rushes to the flood, | to bathe his sides and cool his fiery blood’.⁸¹ That Pope should lift such spirited bits from his predecessors is not surprising, since he patently admired the ‘daring fiery spirit’ of Chapman’s version and commended Dryden’s Virgil as ‘the most noble and spirited translation I know in any language’.⁸² Pope, though critical of it in other ways, thus draws vigour from his native tradition.⁸³

⁷⁹ Pope’s more restrained syntactical parallelism, set in high relief by the couplet form, is a marked contrast to Dryden’s exuberant and overflowing syntax in this passage; on the deeper significance of this feature in Pope’s verse, see Lynch (1982).

⁸⁰ Pope (1715–20/1943) 123.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 283.

⁸² *Ibid.* pp. xx–xxi.

⁸³ In addition to Pope’s comments on his English predecessors in the preface to his published edition, there exists a draft of a more extensive discussion of other translators in Latin and French that helps to clarify his relation to the Continent; see Warren (1931).

To his own credit, though, we see Pope attempting to come to terms with *κροαίνων* by writing ‘beats the trembling ground’, and that he absorbs two participial expressions rather succinctly with ‘Pamper’d and proud’ (for *ἀκοστήσας ἐπὶ φάτνῃ* and *κυδιόων*). We might even admire the economy of ‘And springs, exulting, to his fields again’, which dispenses with the psychological *ὁ δ᾿ἀγλαΐῃφι πεποιθώς*; through the more neutral participle ‘exulting’. It also condenses Homer’s grammatically awkward reference to the horse’s knees bearing him away swiftly with the single word ‘springs’, and collapses the binomial expression *τ᾿ ἤθεα καὶ νομόν ἵππων* to ‘his fields’. This is all tied off with the rhyme that closes the couplet and the simile—a dainty piece of work and a triumph of concision.

Lastly in our series of classic English translations, we find William Cowper engaging in a kind of stylistic dissent reminiscent of Ennius. Cowper did not agree with the use of rhyme for rendering ancient poetry, and raised instead the standard of blank verse first run up the flagpole of English epic by John Milton, who was himself claiming a closer approximation to ancient verse by rejecting rhyme as the ornament of a ‘barbarous age’.⁸⁴ To do this at the height of fame for Pope’s version was an open affront, and Cowper felt moved as he set himself up as the Anti-Pope to make a solemn pronouncement: ‘On this head, therefore, the English reader is to be admonished, that the matter found in me, whether he like it or not, is found also in Homer, and that the matter not found in me, how much soever he may admire it, is found only in Mr. Pope. I have omitted nothing; I have invented nothing.’⁸⁵ He is often true to his word in how he stays closer to Homer than any previous translator, though the twisting jolt of Milton’s syntax can seem as far from Homeric flow as the precious rhymes of the Augustans.

As some stall’d horse high-fed, his stable-cord
 Snapt short, *beats under foot the sounding plain*,
 Accustomed in smooth-sliding streams *to lave*
Exulting; high he bears his head, his mane
 Undulates o’er his shoulders, pleased he eyes
His glossy sides, and borne on pliant knees
 Shoots to the meadow where his fellows graze;⁸⁶

As the highlighted words indicate, Cowper is somewhat haunted by the Pope he seeks to supplant, as in ‘beats under foot the sounding plain’, a clear

⁸⁴ See Milton’s prefatory note on the verse form: ‘The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin; rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre [. . .]’ (1667/1998) 54.

⁸⁵ Cowper (1791/1837) pp. viii–ix.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 166–167.

descendant of ‘beats the trembling ground’, and perhaps a better imitation of the rich vocalic texture of *κροαίνων*. Although Cowper is far closer to Homeric syntax in the line ‘Accustomed in smooth-sliding streams to lave’—in which he even maintains the epithet *ἐύρρεϊος* while adding alliterative effects of his own—the verb ‘to lave’ is redolent of Pope. He follows it straight away with ‘exulting’, a happy rendering for *κυδιόων* that had earlier appeared in Pope’s ‘And springs, exulting, to his fields again’ to get around *ὁ δ’ ἀγλαΐηφι πεποιθώς*. Cowper appears to have lifted Pope’s ‘his shining sides’ as a means to deal with that last Homeric phrase; now we read ‘pleased, he eyes | his glossy sides’, which gives us a more objective indication of the horse’s mood and completes the image of his self-indulgent bathing (is the glossiness an echo of Virgil’s *emicat?*). We might even detect a more pervasive condition of being haunted in the fact that, try as he might, Cowper cannot seem to avoid a strikingly high incidence of assonance in this passage (plain-lave-mane; eyes-knees-graze), as if the rhyming impulse still lurks just under the surface. This seems almost like an uncanny symptom of the literary unconscious, as blank verse seeks to break away from the gravitational force of rhyme.

But influence can be seen in both positive and negative terms here. Cowper eschews the Virgilian mares, and in fact seems to draw attention to this change when he writes, ‘Shoots to the meadow where *his fellows* graze’, almost giving the meadow the quality of a men’s club. The significance of the negative, of what is *not* done, is no minor point here, as it is an integral part of differential retranslation, though such a swerve is not always easy to detect. Already by Cowper’s time the translational series is complex enough to precipitate such pointed deviations, and the situation in English today is such that we can point to many clear instances of counter-traditional translations that try to break severely with previous norms, like W. H. D. Rouse’s folksy prose versions of Homer, or Stanley Lombardo’s flagrantly American ones.⁸⁷

But it is of course quite wrong to think Cowper has undone the strong hold of Latin on Greek, since his recourse to the Miltonic form of epic is rife with impeccably Miltonic Latinisms, such as the ‘undulates’ in this passage. ‘Exulting’ is another good example, and it is a Latinism that suitably renders *κυδιόων*—which, the reader may recall, was a participle designating the human emotion and value of *kudos*, only here transferred to an animal. The Latin *exultans* captures the feeling quite well, but it is a transfer in the opposite direction; *ex(s)ultare* was a verb appropriate to animals (originally, ‘to frisk about, rear, prance’) transferred to humans in the sense ‘jump for joy,

⁸⁷ For other attempts to get to Homer ‘round the back of Pope’ in the nineteenth century, see Ricks (2006).

boast'. Spondanus had already come upon this solution in his Latin translation of 1606, and it is no surprise to see it here in Cowper. But others of Cowper's Latinisms do not wear well today, as when in book six Hecuba prepares the sacrifices to Minerva: 'the Queen, her palace entering, charged | Her maidens; they, *incontinent*, throughout | All Troy convened the matrons as she bade'.⁸⁸ Cowper strives to reconfigure Homer within his own literary tradition and seeks, like Ennius and Milton, to make a decisive statement through his very choice of verse form. But for all his nonconformist seriousness in getting closer to Homer, he cannot escape using highly Latinate means to do so.

CODA: MARES, NORMS, AND *NACHTRÄGLICHKEIT*

What, then, can I say by way of conclusion about retranslation, the Latin epic tradition, and our 'classic' English translations? First, that Glenn Most's point about the bifocality of the classical tradition needs substantial modification, since the full realization of the Latin tradition's literary project in terms of *explicit* translation effectively came only later in those vernacular languages that had fully absorbed the tutelary influence of Latin as a kind of literary Superego. As such, we must—I contend—read our 'classic' English translations of Homer in line with the Latin tradition and see them as, in a sense, products of the latter's *Nachträglichkeit* or 'deferred action', to use another bit of psychoanalytic jargon. This raises the entry price, of course, for literacy *vis-à-vis* the English tradition, but ties it more vitally and productively into that process of reflective creativity and deep play we call the classical tradition.

Second, we can say that epic retranslation forces us to examine the vertical axis of previous translations, and not just the horizontal axis typically fetishized in the source-text/target-text model. This situation may well be atypical in its diachronic depth, as I have admitted from the start; but it has always been the case for English Homers, and is true for many other traditions besides (certainly for French or German, but not so for, say, Japanese or Arabic). The implications of this for translation studies would be to further the critique of any blandly sociological approach to literary norms, pushing instead the translator's scenario towards a thicker description along both diachronic and synchronic lines. But this just follows the decade-long trend of the 'cultural turn' in translation studies, and tightens the focus on the individual working within a background of ideologies and self-construed

⁸⁸ Cowper (1791/1837) 158; 6. 349–51; added emphasis.

traditions, for a *specific* audience, and with creative needs of her own.⁸⁹ Given the high stakes of the epic genre—the *Urgenre* in a sense, the very origin of the literary in the West—we might even term epic retranslation the translational scenario of maximum cultural density, rivalled only by the Bible.

All this talk of individuals and tradition seems to return us to a more agonal, individualistic view, worthier of the impassioned Oedipal poetics of Harold Bloom than the tidy formalist vagueness of Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury. But for those of us whose engagement with translation studies is largely bounded by our interest in the reception of classical culture, it seems the proper way to go, for we are always already dealing with the matter of repetition, in the original Latin sense of ‘fetching back, trying to reach again’. This came home to me recently as I questioned the translator Stanley Lombardo at a conference about his own rendering of the Homeric horse simile, which seemed to me to have revived after many years the Virgilian outlook on the text:

*Picture a horse that has fed on barley in his stall
Breaking his halter and galloping across the plain,
Making for his accustomed swim in the river,
A glorious animal, head held high, mane streaming
like wind on his shoulders. Sure of his splendor
He prances by the horse-runs and the mares in pasture.⁹⁰*

When questioned, Lombardo was aware of the Virgilian tradition and its mares, but far more interested in two other synchronic matters: how to avoid reusing the word ‘horse’ after using ‘horse-runs’, and how once, on a horse farm in Kentucky, he had indeed seen the mares react to a stallion proudly prancing by. Lombardo was thus far from merely engaging in what Wordsworth called ‘the trade in classic niceties | The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase | From languages that want the living voice | To carry meaning to the natural heart’.⁹¹ He crafted as a sensible poet and a real person in the world, and sought to make the simile effective accordingly. That may not be earth-shattering as a theory of translation, but it certainly fetches back the cultural function of the Homeric simile, which as Elizabeth Minchin has recently argued, is clear evidence of the oral poet’s reliance upon visual memory, one of his most essential assets.⁹² To translate a simile, after all, is to offer the likeness of a likeness, and Lombardo has marshalled the tricks of typography (italics and offset indentation) to bring back into higher focus that extraordinary and ancient technique of visualization, which mediates between lost worlds and the common present. This in a translation that in so many other ways strives to break with our ‘classic’ English Homers, imposing

⁸⁹ See e.g. Pym (1998). ⁹⁰ Lombardo (1997) 127, original italics.

⁹¹ Wordsworth (1850/1979) 6. 109–12.

⁹² Minchin (2001) 157.

instead the clipped norms of American speech that one hears in old war movies.⁹³ To read translated epic in this way, attending to its deviations and revocations, is to open one's mind to the full panoply of tradition *as creative difference*, not the endless 'trade in classic niceties'.

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⁹³ I had first used Lombardo's translations of Homer in teaching a film course entitled *Epic Masculinities*, because I thought the film studies crowd would 'get' Homer better from Lombardo than from Fagles or Lattimore. They were highly effective in class. I was later very surprised to hear Lombardo confess at a conference at Haverford College that watching old American war films was an essential preparation for his translation of the *Iliad*.

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Tradition, Translation and Colonization: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement and Deconstructing the Classics

Azzedine Haddour

Mathematics is a living plant which has flourished and languished with the rise and fall of civilizations. Created in some pre-historical period it struggled for existence through centuries of pre-history and further centuries of recorded history. It finally secured a firm grip on life in the highly congenial soil of Greece and waxed strong for a brief period. In this period it produced one perfect flower, Euclidean geometry. The buds of other flowers opened slightly and with close inspection the outlines of trigonometry and algebra could be discerned; but these withered with the decline of Greek civilization, and the plant remained dormant for one thousand years.¹

The earliest influence tending to transform thought and life in medieval Europe was the introduction of Greek works. The first significant contact with these works was made through the Arabs. Late in the medieval period some of the Greek scholars, who resided in Constantinople, the centre of the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire, became discouraged by the poverty there and migrated to Italy. Those who remained were driven from their homes when the Turks captured the city and these, too, sought refuge in Italy. By the fifteenth century, it became possible to make translations into Latin directly from the Greek manuscripts these scholars brought with them. From this time on the impact of Greek knowledge on European thought was boundless. All the great scientists of the Renaissance acknowledged the Greeks as their inspiration and gave credit to that people for specific ideas. The Polish Copernicus, the German Kepler, the Italian Galileo, the French Descartes, and the English Newton received light and warmth from the sun of Greece.²

¹ Kline (1972) 10.

² Ibid. 100–1.

INTRODUCTION

In his *Mathematics in Western Culture*, Morris Kline demystifies the view that mathematics is an abstract subject, the preserve of the privileged few. He argues that it is a body of knowledge that permeates every aspect of modern culture. ‘Mathematics is more than a method, an art, and a language. It is a body of knowledge with content that serves the physical and social scientist, the philosopher, the logician, and the artist; content that influences the doctrines of statesmen and theologians; content that satisfies the curiosity of the man who surveys the heavens and the man who muses on the sweetness of musical sounds; and content that has undeniably, if sometimes imperceptibly, shaped the course of modern history.’³ Kline acknowledges the contributions of the Greeks and Hindus to the development of mathematics. In the first quotation, Kline deploys an organic imagery which roots Mathematics in the field of Western epistemology. The passive in the last sentence underplays the role taken by the Arabs, covering over the fact they invented Algebra. In the second quotation, Kline uses again a colourful language to the same effect: his meteorological metaphors reinforce the idea that mathematics is Indo-European. This diurnal scheme obscures the contribution of the Arabs. It reinforces the idea that knowledge is rooted in the West.⁴ The Arabs just provided a point of contact with ancient Greece. Their translation of mathematics is considered as a passive mediation of knowledge from ancient Greece and fifteenth-century India to the West.⁵

³ Kline (1972) 9.

⁴ One must emphasize the role played by the translation movement from Greek into Pahlavi and from the latter into Arabic. Translation from the Sanskrit was important especially in the field of astronomy. For a more detailed discussion, see Gutas (1998) 24–5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak comments on the influence of Arabic on Bangoli, a language which originates from Sanskrit. ‘Through the centuries of the Mughal empire in India (1526–1857) and the corresponding Nawabate in Bengal,’ she writes, ‘Bengali was enriched by many Arabic and especially Persian Loan-words. Of course Bengali is derived from Sanskrit, which was by then “dead”, so the relationship is altogether different. But learned and worldly Bengali gentlemen were proficient in Arabic, and especially Persian—the languages of the court and the law.’ Spivak (2005) 97–8. However, British imperialism displaced Arabic. As Spivak argues, ‘William Jones’s discovery that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin were related languages even gave the Hindus and the English a common claim to Aryanism, a claim to intertranslatability’ (ibid. 98). This claim aimed at discounting the significance of Islam as the religion of translation which mediated between various languages. Arguably, the purging of the Arabic and Persian components out of Hindi, which was started under British rule in India and which would continue in the post-independence, was part of a larger European project to put Arabic under erasure, to silence it, to deny its status in classicism.

⁵ Kline (1972) 38.

If Kline affirms that the land where the first seeds of mathematics were sown is an Indo-Europeanized Orient, its development follows a Hegelian teleology; as the sun arising from the East, the cradle of religions and ancient civilizations, is destined to illuminate the West. Max Meyerhof provides us with a different perspective. 'Looking back', he writes, 'we may say that Islamic medicine and science reflected the light of Hellenic sun, when its day had fled, and that they shone like a moon, illuminating the darkest night of the European Middle Ages; that some bright stars lent their own light, and that moon and stars alike faded at the dawn of a new day—the Renaissance. Since they had their share in the direction and introduction of that great movement, it may reasonably be claimed that *they are with us yet*.'⁶ Despite acknowledging the contribution of the Islamic tradition, one cannot help but detect a latent Orientalism associating this tradition with the crescent and confining it to the obscurity of the night.

However, echoing Meyerhof's view, Robert Briffault contends that modern European civilization would not have arisen at all without the contribution of the Arabs. Islamic culture was influential in the development of Europe and its contribution to the field of science was momentous. In fact, science owes its very existence to Arab culture.⁷ The Arabs gathered their knowledge from Greek and Hellenistic sources, but this knowledge, Briffault claims, originated from 'the Babylonians, migrants from Arabia to Mesopotamia, like the Arabs'. Briffault concludes that 'ancient science which the latter restored to Europe was itself the achievement of their own ancient cousins from whom the Greeks had once borrowed it'.⁸ Briffault's point here is not to discredit the achievement of the Greeks, but rather to underscore the contributions of other traditions to knowledge. To the considerable contribution of the Hindus in the fifteenth century to mathematics, the Arabs perfected the decimal system by introducing number zero (*sifr*) and by inventing Algebra. 'Not only did the Arabs create those mathematics which were to be the indispensable instrument of scientific analysis,' Briffault argues, 'they laid the foundation of those methods of experimental research which in conjunction with mathematical analysis gave birth to modern science.'⁹

In the Western tradition, there is a sort of 'intellectual fundamentalism' that refuses to acknowledge the contribution of Islamic culture to the fields of

⁶ Italics are mine. Meyerhof (1931) 354.

⁷ Briffault (1938) 191: 'What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs.'

⁸ Ibid. 194.

⁹ Ibid.

sciences and to the Humanities. The same ethnocentricism which conceals the fact that the Arabs made significant strides in the field of science, and particularly in mathematics and medicine, is also at work in the study of the classics, as well as in philosophy. As a matter of fact, it created a diremption between the Islamic culture and the classical heritage it helped preserve. In the following two sections, I will examine the ethnocentric underpinnings of the Western tradition which made Islam and classicism incongruous notions. The crux of my argument is that Islam is part of the fabric of Western epistemology. Through the study of the role played by the translation movements from Greek to Arabic and from the latter to Latin, I will undertake first of all the project of deconstructing the foundational idea that the classics are inherited directly from ancient Greek and Latin. Arguably, this fundamentalism and the religious fanaticism which putatively came to be associated with this culture represent two sides of the same coin: both are in fact sustained by an Orientalism which subjected the latter to the colonial rules of the former. Contra the Orientalizing characterization of Islam as a religion of fanaticism, I will have occasion to show that through translation it in fact promoted rationalism. In the third section, I will provide a critique of Western colonialism which suppressed the contribution of the Arabs; through a consideration of Frantz Fanon and Abdelkabar Khatibi, I will argue that a genuine decolonization must be sought at the level of European thought.

RADICAL ORIENTALISM

In the introductory section I intimated that the Arabs played an important part in the development of science. The same holds for their contribution to the Humanities and Social Sciences. Arguably, Islamic culture provided the very foundation of these two fields. In *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, Dimitri Gutas writes:

A century and a half of Graeco-Arabic scholarship has amply documented that from about the middle of the eighth century to the end of the tenth, almost *all* non-literary and non-historical secular Greek books that were available throughout the Eastern Byzantine Empire and the Near East were translated into Arabic. What this means is that all of the following Greek writings, other than the exceptions just noted, which have reached us from Hellenistic, Roman, and late antiquity times, and many more that have not survived in the original Greek, were subjected to the transformative magic of the translator's pen: astrology and alchemy and the rest of the occult sciences; the subjects of the quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and theory of music; the entire field of Aristotelian philosophy throughout its history: metaphysics, ethics,

physics, zoology, botany, and especially logic—the *Organon*; all the health sciences: medicine, pharmacology, and veterinary science; and various other marginal genres of writings, such as Byzantine handbooks on military science (the *tactica*), popular collections of wisdom sayings, and even books on falconry—all these subjects passed through the hands of the translators.¹⁰

Two salient points could be drawn from Gutas's statement: (1) Arabic rescued Greek philosophy and great works; (2) one cannot underestimate the influence which Arabic translation had on these works. I concur with the view of Gutas that 'the study of post-classical Greek secular writings can hardly proceed without the evidence in Arabic, which in this context becomes the second classical language, even before Latin.'¹¹

The translation movement from Greek and other languages into Arabic which emerged in the eighth century marked an epistemological shift. It is important to examine the historical, cultural, and political contexts which determined this movement. Greek was the *lingua franca* used in the administration of the Umayyads in Damascus; it was also the language of the clergy.¹² As Gutas shows, in the seventh and eighth centuries Greek Christians, in their attempt to redefine themselves, moved away from Hellenism and its outmoded old Greek literature. The Umayyads could not provide them with an intellectual context to express themselves; but, with the advent of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty, these Christians would henceforth discover an outlet in the movement of Graeco-Arabic translation to satisfy their cultural needs.¹³ Gutas provides a pithy account of the religious, linguistic and demographic factors in the development of this movement:

With the 'Abbāsīd revolution, the foundation of Baghdad, and the transfer of the seat of the caliphate to 'Irāq, the situation of the Arab empire with regard to its cultural orientations changed drastically. Away from Byzantine influence in Damascus, there developed a new multicultural society in Baghdad based on the completely different demographic mix of population in 'Irāq. This consisted of (a) Aramaic-speakers, Christians, and Jews, who formed the majority of the settled population; (b) Persian-speakers, concentrated primarily in the cities; and (c) Arabs, partly sedentarized and Christian, like those at al-Hīra on the Euphrates, and partly nomadic, in the grazing grounds of northern 'Irāq. The Arab Muslims—other, of course, than those in the new capital—were concentrated, to the north, in the trading center of Mosul (Mawṣil) and in the Sawād to the south, in the original garrison cities founded by them, Kūfa, Baṣra, and Wāsīt, the first two of which provided, from the second/eighth century onwards, one of the most significant influences in the formation of the new melting-pot culture.¹⁴

¹⁰ Gutas (1998) 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 2.

¹² *Ibid.* 17.

¹³ *Ibid.* 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Classical Islamic civilization owed its existence to this ethnic mix, but such multiculturalism was not without its problems. The 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Manṣūr (754–75) used translation as an ideology to cement the fractures within an emergent empire and produce a 'commonsense'. Whilst attempting to reconcile the rival factions, he had to appeal to one of the dominant factions that brought the 'Abbāsīds to power, the Persians, by promoting the idea that the 'Abbāsīd empire was the legitimate successor of the Sasanians.¹⁵ This ideology, which rested on translation, initially provided an impetus for these factions to revive Zoroastrianism, as well as the opportunity to rescue their religious texts by rendering them into Arabic, the language of an ascending Islamic empire. It would ultimately lead to an increasing Islamization of these groups. The translation movement thus played a key role in the consolidation of the 'Abbāsīd empire: it developed under the aegis of al-Manṣūr in Baghdad which was not only '[the] symbol of his indisputable rule but also of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty as the heir to the rich past of the Near East with its mosaic of various peoples, religions, and traditions'.¹⁶

As it established its hegemony, the 'Abbāsīd state sought to challenge the opponents of Islam.¹⁷ One of the most effective weapons used was the power of argumentation and discourse: the *ḡadal* [dialectics].¹⁸ With al-Ma'mūn translation fulfilled a different function: it was no longer an ideology cementing the fissures within the edifice of the empire but it was deployed in the business of exegesis, as a tool for interpreting the scriptures on the basis of argument and discursive rationalism. To defend Islam, it was adopted against *zandaqa* (heretic Manichaeism), as well as against the fundamental precepts of Christianity. The imperative to subject the scriptures to the requirement of discursive reason enabled Al-Ma'mūn to seize the authority which was invested in the religious scholars and to become the guardian of the faith and the ultimate interpreter of religion.¹⁹ Despite his philhellenism, he never accepted the polytheism and paganism of ancient Greece. It is important to point out that the translation of Greek texts was made to conform to the

¹⁵ Gutas (1998) 28–9.

¹⁶ Ibid. 52.

¹⁷ Ibid. 64.

¹⁸ Ibid. 62–7. Al-Manṣūr's son and successor, al-Mahdī, commissioned the translation of Aristotle's *Topics*. Gutas points out: 'The political struggles in the time of al-Mahdī and the quest of the 'Abbāsīd house for legitimacy rested on religious or theological positions which had to be defended against their opponents. Theologians were already deeply involved in argument, and soon the jurists joined in. It was amply clear to Muslims participating in the debates that excellence in disputation was politically significant, and disputation eventually became the practice *par excellence* in legal studies and methodology. When the jurists established the first Islamic schools in the fourth/tenth century, it was to teach dialectic and jurisprudence' (ibid. 69). Gutas is right to suggest that Islamic theology (*'ilm al-kalam*, the science of speech or reading) stems from translation.

¹⁹ Ibid. 82.

standards of Islam as a Book religion. To echo Khatibi, Aristotle was put at the service of Islam; it is perhaps his conversion (translation) into Islam which rescued him from obscurity.²⁰ What is important to stress here is that al-Ma'mūn employed Greek philosophy as a weapon to attack one of the main tenets of another Book religion, namely the Holy Trinity, with the sole intention of establishing a specific monotheistic conception of the Unique. It is within this context that we must reinterpret Khatibi's contention that Islam is a theology of translation, that Arabic philosophy is essentially Greek, that the Arabs reinvented Aristotle by effacing his Greek paganism and by introducing monotheism,²¹ and that through translation they reinforced a 'metaphysics of the Text' which would privilege the written: a metaphysics enshrined in the scriptural. To sum up: through translation, as Gutas shows, al-Manṣūr consolidated the 'Abbāsīd state, his grandson al-Ma'mūn would wage war against religious irrationalism and obscurantism, an imperialist war against the Christian Byzantines, who were held responsible for the decline of Hellenistic culture and civilization.²² This war against obscurantism was at the origin of a long history of conflict and cultural interchange. The Crusades and Europe's expegefaction in the Renaissance were but two instances of this history. I will focus my attention on this politics in the next section. At this stage it is important to concentrate on the economy of translation.

Translation as a shuttle was caught up in this politics which motivated conflict and impeded or expedited the progress of interchange. Translation was the superstructural bridge which facilitated the bearing across of cultural artefacts from Greek and other traditions into Arabic. But this means of communication was part of building an infrastructure which was crucial for the economy of the emergent Islamic empire. In other words, translation as exchange and circulation of cultural capital had a currency within an empire that connected major urban centres extending geographically from India, China, and Byzantium to Black Africa and Christian Europe, thus establishing a very important bridge between these cultural locations and facilitating productive exchange.²³ Maurice Lombard stresses

the importance of routes which recorded the advance, the swift or slow, continuous or interrupted, progress of influences through this privileged transit area, the Muslim World up to the eleventh century. The result was the spread to the West—the Muslim West and beyond—of knowledge and skills acquired by the older countries of the East,

²⁰ To paraphrase Khatibi, Islam is a metaphysics of an invisible God that lost from his view the Greek gods. Or as Khatibi puts it in his eccentric way: 'Aristotle entered Islam well before the advent of the latter.' Khatibi (1983) 22.

²¹ *Ibid.* 22.

²² Gutas (1998) 82–5, 94.

²³ Lombard (2004) 236.

modified and enriched by coming together in the same geographical area, and also the transmission of new influences which had come along the long-distance trade routes from India, central Asia, and China.²⁴

These routes and the urban network assisted the movement of translation and the dissemination of knowledge. From the eighth to the eleventh century a syncretic culture developed in the Muslim empire, with a network of urban cities, viz. 'Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Kairouan, Fez, and Palermo, all of them important staging-posts on the route from Samarkand to Cordoba, [that] bore witness to the amazing unity of a syncretic civilization with its vast movements of men, merchandise, and ideas, a civilization superimposed on the older regional, rural, or nomadic background'.²⁵ Translation was bound up with trade: trade of ideas, but also trade of commodities. Lombard outlines the dynamics of the latter and its impact on the economy of Europe. Echoing the same view, Briffault maintains that with the introduction of the system of bills of exchange, i.e. the *dinar*, trade generated wealth in Moorish Spain and Sicily.²⁶ This would have a major impact on the political economy of Europe. Not only did this new wealth establish trading-posts, it also developed urban centres and created sites for cultural interchange.

The strategic position of the Muslim empire was advantageous for trade and translation. The products of this intellectual endeavour were disseminated across a vast empire which impinged upon southern Europe. The work of translation must not be understood in its strict sense as the rendering of a text from one language into another, but as movement of knowledge made possible thanks to the 'caravans laden with manuscripts [...] plied from Bokhara to the Tigris, from Egypt to Andalusia'.²⁷ Nevertheless, Lombard identifies the eleventh century as a landmark signalling a shift in power from East to West: 'the centre of gravity of the Ancient World swung from one place to another. From now on, the nerve centres and centres of influence of an expanding economy were no longer in the East, in the cities of the Muslim World. They moved westwards and became established in the mercantile cities of Italy and Flanders and, half-way along the great trade route linking them with each other, in the trade fairs of Champagne, where the products of Nordic lands and of Mediterranean countries were bought and sold'.²⁸ This economic decline would not impact immediately on the intellectual influence of the Muslim empire in the fields of philosophy and science. However, the Renaissance would signal a perceptible epistemological shift marking the beginning of Europe's dominance in these fields of intellectual endeavour.

²⁴ Lombard (2004) 236. ²⁵ Ibid. ²⁶ Briffault (1938) 204–5.

²⁷ Ibid. 188. ²⁸ Lombard (2004) 237–8.

My aim here is not to study such epistemological shifts but to show, albeit in a cursory fashion, that the Arabs edified an 'intermediary civilization'.²⁹ The translation movement, or better still the cultural traffic, which promoted a cultural interchange between European and Islamic civilizations, can be characterized in Khatibi's phraseology as a 'radical Orientalism'. As we will see, this kind of Orientalism is at variance with the Orientalism which Said adumbrates.

Before I turn to this matter, let me conclude this section by throwing into relief the following two issues. First, the demographic factor was conducive for the translation movement; different groups belonging to different linguistic communities and ethnicities participated in the making of the texture of classical Islamic civilization.³⁰ Elaborating on the syncretic character of this civilization, Lombard writes: 'Set between China, India, Byzantium, and the medieval barbarian societies—Turkish, Negro, and Western—Muslim civilization in its Golden Age, from the end of the ancient Empires to the emergence of the modern States, was a melting-pot in time and space, a great crossroads, a vast synthesis, an amazing meeting-place.'³¹ If anything, the hybrid nature of this culture points to one fact: imperial powers were always already decentred. It is tempting to argue that the 'Abbāsīd dynasty precipitated the decentring of our global world. Secondly, this deconstructive reading subverts the prevalent assumption that Graeco-Latin culture is a Western legacy, handed down to Modern Western Europe directly without being interfered with by other cultures and civilizations. Of course, this erroneous view ignores the mediation of Islamic scholarship through the vehicle of translation: Islamic culture is imbricated in the very foundation of the episteme which comes to define the Western.

WESTERN TRADITIONS

Western metaphysics wants to present itself as a coherent body of knowledge. Of course, this putative 'closed' system is nothing if not leaky; the representation is nothing but a mythic construction, a fabrication which seeks to hide the sources of its knowledge, which are diverse. To characterize such imposture and dishonesty, the epithet 'plagiarism' comes to mind. There is a great deal to be said about the implication of tradition in this business of plagiarism—that is the 'appropriation' as a sort of handing down of knowledge without acknowledgment or recognition. However, my aim is to examine the

²⁹ Khatibi (1983) 19.

³⁰ Gutas (1998) 19.

³¹ Lombard (2004) 239.

ideological underpinnings of such a foundational notion of 'Western tradition' and its 'classical' texture, in order to deconstruct this (mis)conception of 'Western' metaphysics as the sole originator of modernity and all the 'posts' which have thus far come to critique it or to give credence to this fallacy. Simply put, and as has been shown above, what is putatively designated as 'Western' has never been *purely* Western. Before I undertake this deconstructive project, let me first define concepts, such as 'classical', 'tradition', and 'translation' as agencies implicated in this ideological mystification.

The term 'classical' refers us to great works of 'human imagination'—to artefacts of literary and historical note, which have enduring interest and value, in the sense that they are constitutive of the cultural heritage of humankind. The Humanities, as a discipline, is bound up with this humanist definition. Nonetheless, the definition is selective as it purports to be Western, and my purpose is here to problematize the ethnocentricism inherent within it: the Western tradition boasts that it is the direct heir of the 'classical' as a body of literary works of ancient Greece and Rome, thus obfuscating the significance of other traditions which mediated these works. In other words, a direct line, seamless and continuous, seems to relate Europe to Rome and ancient Greece, whence the light shone on the Renaissance enlightening Europe. Before I question this classicist view of 'Western Tradition', it is important to define the terms 'tradition' and 'translation' as its mediating agencies.

Etymologically, 'tradition' originates from the Latin verb *tradere*, i.e. 'to hand over or deliver'. According to Raymond Williams, the Latin noun connotes: (1) 'delivery'; (2) 'handing down knowledge' or 'passing on a doctrine'; (3) 'surrender or betrayal'.³² As we shall see, some of these connotations have complicit correlations with the term 'translation'. But what I want to emphasize here is the ideological function of tradition as an agency of mediation; in the sense that it is a *transrelational* process of selecting those aspects of one's significant past and of passing these down through the generations. Tradition must not be confused with the remnants of history as a dead past, but it is an active process which shapes the future.

Let me open a parenthesis to note that translation is akin to tradition in so much as both notions convey the idea of delivery and handing down of meaning, as well as that of treachery associated with 'surrender' and 'betrayal'. A great deal has been said about the business of translation and treason; that is the failure to render the original text without loss of signification. The Italian maxim captures this betrayal: *traduttore, traditore*. A great deal has also been said about the ideological mystification of tradition, in that certain cultural

³² Williams (1976) 268–9. Cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* s.v. *tradere*.

significations are obscured or relegated to marginality in the process of delivery. To elaborate on the problematic nature of this process, the parallel Robert Young draws between translation and post-colonialism is useful. In *Postcolonialism*, he establishes a connection between 'post-colonialism' and 'translation'; a connection which could help us not only better to define the latter concept but to rethink the idea of classicism. In Young's words:

Nothing comes closer to the central activity and political dynamism of postcolonialism than the concept of translation. It may seem that the apparently neutral, technical activity of translating a text from one language into another operates in a realm very distinct from the highly charged political landscapes of the postcolonial world. Even at a technical level, however, the links can be significant. Literally, according to its Latin etymology, translation means to carry or to bear across. Its literal meaning is thus identical with that of metaphor, which, according to its Greek etymology, means to carry or to bear across.³³

In *Post-colonial Translation*, Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi note that translation as metaphor denoting the function of 'transposition' and of 'carrying across' is spatial.³⁴ Like Bassnett and Trivedi, Young underscores the implication of translation in the colonial project: 'A colony begins as a translation, a copy of the original located elsewhere on the map. New England. New Spain. New Amsterdam. New York. Colonial clone. A far-away reproduction that will, inevitably, always turn out differently.'³⁵ Let me note in passing that the texture of classical Islamic civilization is patterned on a similar economy: translation as cultural transposition. The metaphorical displacement occasioned by the work of translation is, according to Young, governed by the rule of metaphor. He concludes that the main preoccupation of post-colonialism is the study of 'these kinds of linguistic, cultural, and geographical transfer, transformations'.³⁶

Translation could be described as a means of transport: a mobile vehicle. The prefix *trans* floats, it functions like a metaphor that carries meaning from place to place. This 'taxing' of meaning is, arguably, the very function of language, but one must be careful not to conflate translation as a function with language as its essential material. If the slippage from signifier to signifier in language gives rise to metaphorical displacement, which Young discusses, the ambivalence which characterizes the work of translation results from a movement *between* languages. It is a feature of bilingualism or rather

³³ Young (2003) 138–9. See also Tymoczko (1999) 19–20: 'Translation as metaphor for post-colonial writing . . . invokes for [Tymoczko] the sort of activity associated with the etymological meaning of the word: translation as the activity of *carrying across*.'

³⁴ Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) 5 stress 'the role played by translation in facilitating colonization'. They define 'the metaphor of colony as a translation, a copy of an original located elsewhere on the map'.

³⁵ Young (2003) 139.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

biculturalism. To grasp the semiological operation at work in translation, let me draw on Barthes's definition of 'connotation' and 'denotation' and the very useful distinction he makes between the sign as constituted of signifier and signified at the first-level signification and the sign as signifier of mythology at the second-level signification. With translation there is a third-level signification, for translation uses the whole linguistic system as signifier to vehicle the materiality of another as its signified. Like in Barthes's description of myth as a parasite that lives at the expense of the historical materiality of the sign, translation 'cannibalizes' the language which it translates. This cannibalistic appropriation smacks of plagiarism.

Young defines the ideological function of translation as pertaining to the workings of colonial discourse. He maintains that 'to translate a text from one language to another is to transform its material identity. With colonialism, the transformation of an indigenous culture into the subordinated culture of a colonial regime, or the superimposition of the colonial apparatus into which all aspects of the original culture have to be reconstructed, operate as processes of translational dematerialization. At the same time, though, certain aspects of the indigenous culture may remain untranslatable.'³⁷ It is this *translational dematerialization* which is of interest to me in the study of the classical. 'Dematerialization' conveys a certain bias inherent within Western epistemology: its selective view.

In 'Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation', Lori Chamberlain takes a similar view as Young, as she focuses on the issue of authority and on the 'politics of originality'³⁸ from a gendered perspective. In her account, the metaphorics of translation is not only marked by the dimensions of gender and sexuality, but it is also overdetermined by the expropriating economy of colonial politics. Simply put: 'the struggle for authorial rights takes place both in the realm of the family... and in the state, for translation has also been figured as the literary equivalent of colonization, a means of enriching both the language and the literature appropriate to the political needs of expending nations.'³⁹ This view chimes with that of Bassnett and Trivedi who argue: 'Translation has been at the heart of the colonial encounter, and has been used in all kinds of ways to establish and perpetuate the superiority of some cultures over others.'⁴⁰ For Chamberlain, translation is tantamount to the rape of the cultural resources of the colonized. Holding a similar view to that taken by Nietzsche that 'translation [is] a form of conquest',⁴¹ Chamberlain considers translation as a 'strategy of linguistic incorporation'.⁴² She

³⁷ Young (2003) 139–40.

³⁸ Chamberlain (2004) 307.

³⁹ Ibid. 309–10.

⁴⁰ Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) 17.

⁴¹ Nietzsche (1977).

⁴² Chamberlain (2004) 310.

describes translation as ‘rape’ and ‘pillage’ of another text with a view to ‘enrich[ing] the “host” language’.⁴³ In the same vein as Gavronsky and Steiner, Chamberlain uses a vocabulary that pertains to colonial discourse in order to characterize translation as a ‘cannibalistic’ incorporation through assimilation, as an aggressive act of conquest, or in sexual/colonial terms as ‘appropriative penetration’.⁴⁴

Such ‘appropriative penetration’ is a manifestation of what Edward Said calls ‘Orientalism’. The three interrelating definitions of the concept that he provides could indeed help us comprehend its libidinous politics. First, Orientalism is a practice that cuts across several disciplines, and that ‘lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental’.⁴⁵ Secondly, it is an epistemology shaped by this academic practice: an ideology, a world-view, which maintained an ontological difference between the West and its Oriental Other. Thirdly, Orientalism is coterminous with colonialism: that ‘corporate institution’ which emerged in the eighteenth century and came to dominate the Orient. Translation was an agency of this corporate institution. Through it, Orientalism was instrumentally to interpret for us the Orient, ‘dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’.⁴⁶

Orientalism is therefore a by-product of translation; it is in fact bound up with the history of a complex relation between two translation movements: the first movement which, under the ‘Abbāsids, translated Greek and other cultural artefacts into Arabic, disseminated knowledge across the empire and medieval Europe, and thus paved the way to the Renaissance; the second movement represented by Orientalists who sought knowledge in the cultural institutions of this empire and embarked upon translating Arabic texts into Latin. Orientalism, which thrived in academe and which historically originated from the latter movement, underwent a fundamental transformation. Translation which hitherto was an agency of cultural interchange between East and West turned into an agency of political imposition. I concur with Said’s Foucauldian theorization of Orientalism as discourse which, by *translating* the Orient, expressed power through the articulation of knowledge.

Translation first consolidated the intellectual and political dominance of the Islamic civilization which stretched over three continents. Under the ‘Abbāsīd rule, translation initiated a radical Orientalism, which was supplanted by the Orientalism described by Said. The latter brought about the

⁴³ Ibid. 311.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 312.

⁴⁵ Said (1995) 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 3.

closure of what is now perceived as the Western episteme by putting in place a Manichaeism which refuses to acknowledge the contribution of the Orient and excludes it from its texture. It instituted what Said calls 'a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony': a relationship in which the Orient is orientalised.⁴⁷ The domestication of the Orient was part and parcel of a process of translation as textual domestication which endeavoured to assimilate the cultural materiality of the Orient, or better still to colonize it, without acknowledging its cultural referents. The heterogeneous history of the so-called Western episteme is neutralized through the appropriative economy of translation which puts the specificities of its signifiers out of commission.

According to Said, Orientalism is an '*intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world'.⁴⁸ This incorporation is *ideological* in the Marxist sense of term, in that Orientalism's prime intention is to serve the interests of the West, and has very little to do with the Orient.⁴⁹ To some extent, this relationship between the West and Orient mirrors the politics of translation—i.e. the appropriative economy governing the relationship between the original text and the text received in translation, as the latter is made to conform to the ideological, political, and social requirements of the community for whom the text is translated (Venuti 1992). In this sense this text has very little to do with the original and is translated to serve the interests of an ideologically different audience.⁵⁰ Let me hasten to rephrase this politics in Said's description of Orientalism, as a representation, which removes the Orient from its historical and cultural specificities. In Said's terms:

Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. He is never concerned with the Orient except as the first cause of what he says. What he says and writes, by the virtue of the fact that it is said or written, is meant to indicate that the Orientalist is *outside* the Orient, both as an existential and as a moral fact. The principal product of this exteriority is of course representation.⁵¹

This representation *by proxy* silences the Orient; it denies its political voice, as well as suppressing the historical and intellectual role it played in the development of knowledge in Europe's Renaissance. This intellectual emasculation was the outcome of a Manichaeism opposing the East to the West, desire to reason, other to self, and producing a libidinous Orientalism that projected Europe's suppressed sexuality upon an Orientalized other. The Orient was no

⁴⁷ Said (1995) 5. ⁴⁸ Ibid. 12.

⁴⁹ Ibid. ⁵⁰ On the politics and ethics of translation, Venuti (1998).

⁵¹ Said (1995) 20–21. Italics are mine.

longer the subject of intellectual curiosity, but became an object of sexual desire. This emasculation went hand in hand with the feminization of the Orient. Drawing on the work of Joanna de Groot, John MacKensie contends that this feminization at the core of gender representation pertained to a voyeuristic discourse that sought to reinterpret the sexuality of European male viewers. 'Thus the feminising of the East', MacKensie writes, 'reflected a necessary attraction and close connection with European males' inner needs.'⁵² By proxy, Orientalism fulfils the function of procurement and substitution. In the nineteenth century, procurement and substitution are tantamount to rape and prostitution.

I have earlier on alluded to the complicity of translation and tradition in shaping the studies of classics and the field of Humanities. It is my argument that these two notions in handing down knowledge obfuscated the intellectual contribution of the Islamic civilization to this field. What emerged through Orientalism is an essentialist view of this civilization. I do not want to dwell on the exotic representation of the Orient which is nothing but a projection of European repressed sexuality, but let me return briefly to Chamberlain's idea of the metaphoric of translation to underscore the fact that translation was marked not merely by the dimension of gender and sexuality, but by its colonial economy which culminated in pillage of the cultural resources of the Orient and in its rape.

ISLAM: TECHNOLOGY, ETHICS, AND DECOLONIZATION

In *Les Hommes de l'Islam*, Louis Gardet identifies three distinct periods in the history of the Muslims: (1) a period of ascendancy which is characterized by the Muslims' openness to other cultures; (2) a period of decline and retreat into a culture which was to become inward-looking; (3) a post-colonial period in which the Muslims sought to reconcile tradition with modernity.⁵³

As we have seen, in the first period, by being open to other cultures—and translation played a considerable role in this regard—the Arabs managed to cross-fertilize and diversify their culture. Many factors contributed to the achievements of classical Islamic civilization and to its humanist tradition. But, significantly, it was, as many scholars remarked, its 'self-confident openness to what was of genuine value in the achievements of predecessors and contemporaries' which made it great. It is lamentable that Islamic culture nowadays suffers from a 'loss of confidence, a crabbed defensiveness and

⁵² MacKensie (1995) 58.

⁵³ Gardet (1977) 384.

chafing chauvinism grounded in insecurity'.⁵⁴ Western colonialism instigated its sclerosis. My intention is neither to extol nor to linger on the greatness of the Islamic tradition. Nor is it to project a revivalist and backward-looking view of flourishing Islam, whilst Europe was languishing in the Dark Ages. Such a view could only exacerbate centuries-old tensions between Europe and Islam, the root cause of two sorts of fundamentalism: a European one, though hiding under the cloak of universalism and the promotion of democracy, is governed by its colonialist impetus and bent on suppressing the Muslims' humanist tradition; a reactive religious fundamentalism that goes counter to that which constituted this tradition, i.e. its openness to, and translation of, other cultures. Against the caricature demonizing this tradition, so prevalent now in the West, a cautionary remark is needed:

There is another Islam, tolerant, pluralistic, cosmopolitan without triumphalism and spiritual without repression. It too is an authentic expression of Islamic ideals, and a worthier expression of the compassion and generosity that flow through the Islamic texts and traditions, as they do through the texts and traditions of the sister religions of Judaism and Christianity. . . . an Islam that does not typically make headlines. It is subdominant today. Historically, it has often been suppressed. But over the centuries its spirit has inspired marvels of art and literature, philosophy and law. It has been a leaven to institutions that have allowed and encouraged human beings and their communities to flourish. This other Islam is not purist and xenophobic. Like any civilizational phenomenon, it has been nourished in part by practices and ideas that sprang up elsewhere and that took on new and creative forms in their interactions with the ancient and familiar.⁵⁵

This Islam is lost in a translation which does not acknowledge these attributes. This cosmopolitan and pluralistic Islam paved the way to Europe's Renaissance. It is worth reiterating that the Muslim world was a 'melting-pot in which a number of varied and hitherto foreign components were mixed together'. Hybridization is not a novel phenomenon which is brought about by globalization and postmodernity; it was a feature of this world. Translation played a key role in this process of hybridization, the coming together of different cultures and ethnicities. In this section, I will examine the negative impact of Western colonialism on this pluralistic Islam by suppressing its cultural significance in the fields of science and of the Humanities.

This Islam would lose its salient characteristics, as it shut itself in the cocoon of its dogmatic thinking. What was once an open and dynamic culture became caught in the yoke of colonial oppression. Excluded from the diachronic process of history, this culture became 'mummified'. In Albert Memmi's parlance, it could not provide social change: its life was 'frozen' and 'its

⁵⁴ Goodman (2003) 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 23.

structures [were] both corseted and hardened'.⁵⁶ It lost its creative impetus to renew itself through interaction with other cultures. As I have established elsewhere,⁵⁷ 'history' must not be confused with the graveyards or the ruins of the past: it is an active agency which makes the past pass into the future. Likewise, 'tradition' must not be mistaken for the rigidity and dogmatism inherent in the notion of the 'traditional': tradition is inventive; it shapes culture. I have noted the ideological complicity of translation and Western tradition in the colonial project. European colonialism put this agency out of commission and mummified the Muslim culture. Not only would the disjunction between past and present shackle history, but would also produce a historical closure. This culture fell a prey to European colonialism: it lost its faculty to translate other cultures, i.e. the cosmopolitan spirit it hypostatized and the pluralistic conception it represented. Denied a historical role, the Muslims were compelled to fall back on archaic forms of traditional culture. Colonialism shut their society into a mythic time far removed from the present, whilst religion offered them a refuge. The religious formalism—which gave rise to fundamentalism, in colonial times and subsequently—was the symptom of a moribund culture suffering from sclerosis: a diseased culture that '[could] no longer adopt its institutions to its grievous needs'.⁵⁸

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon comments on the necessity to revitalize the colonized culture through an ethics of decolonization enabling it to play a historical role in international politics. Colonialism never promoted a genuine and equal interchange between cultures, but rather the imposition of the colonial dominant over the subaltern. In Fanon's view, decolonization must not shut the colonized in an inward-looking nationalism, it is not 'the closing down of a door to communication' with others. On the contrary, national consciousness is a precondition for opening up dialogue with other independent peoples. This dialogue can be interpreted as a radical kind of translation. It is radical in the sense that it goes against the grain of ethnocentrism. Fanon is adamant that it is 'at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows'.⁵⁹ It is through the project of nation-building that Fanon envisages an ethics of decolonization which empowers subaltern cultures to open up to other cultures. The point which must be made is that this ethics of decolonization is at odds with the ethnocentrism underpinning the Humanities. A critique of this institution—which, as we have seen, never mediated the heterogeneity of the history of knowledge—is beyond the scope of my critical enquiry. But what I will

⁵⁶ Memmi (1974) 97–8.

⁵⁷ Haddour (2000).

⁵⁸ Memmi (1974) 97–8.

⁵⁹ Fanon (1977) 199.

attempt here is a critique of its ideology; which is to say humanism and its implication in the colonial project.

Fanon cautions against Western humanism which 'stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience'.⁶⁰ Upon the putative 'spiritual adventure' of the West which was nothing but a stratagem deployed to consolidate its colonial hegemony, Fanon elaborates: 'It is in the name of the spirit, in the name of the spirit of Europe, that Europe has made her encroachments, that she has justified her crimes and legitimated the slavery in which she holds four-fifths of humanity.'⁶¹ Fanon situates this crisis at the level of 'European thought'.⁶² He argues that such thought never promoted dialogue; rather it shut Man in a solipsistic narcissism. Caught in a state of stasis, such thought was and is still characterized by its 'motionless movement where gradually dialectics is changing into the logic of equilibrium'; a logic sustained by the hegemonic force of colonial Europe.⁶³ To rehumanize humanity, Fanon calls for a new epistemology. For him, the crux of the issue is to reinvent a new discourse which will not be an 'imitation' of an 'obscene caricature' of the thought which governed old Europe. In the concluding section of *The Wretched of the Earth*, as he announces the advent of a new kind of humanism, Fanon writes: 'Come, then, comrades, the European game has finally ended; *we* must find something different. We today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe.'⁶⁴

Khatibi dismisses Fanon's anticolonial slogans as the expression of a wretched consciousness which has lost its path to attain a genuine decolonization. Khatibi could not understand what Fanon meant by the 'European game'; nor could he comprehend the semantics of Fanon's usage of the personal pronoun 'we'. Khatibi asserts that Fanon's revolutionary declaration of independence, his demands for the right of difference, could not be achieved; because, and despite its brutal dominating power, the idea of Europe which unsettled the colonized in colonial times still inhabits their very being. It must not be perceived just as an 'absolute and devastating exteriority' which dominates them.⁶⁵

Although he acknowledges the necessity of Fanon's intervention against colonialism Khatibi criticizes his view of the West as a formulation of 'simplistic hegelianism' borrowed from Sartre.⁶⁶ Khatibi questions Fanon's definition of the West in its propinquity to the colonized 'Maghreb'. A long history of conflict, argues Khatibi, gave rise to a mutual misunderstanding which

⁶⁰ Fanon (1977) 251.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 252.

⁶² *Ibid.* 253.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 53.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 251–2.

⁶⁵ Khatibi (1983) 12. Italics are mine.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 14.

could not be overcome by revolutionary praxis *à la* Fanon, a praxis based on a reductionist reading of Marx or underwritten by a fundamentalist discourse on Arab nationalism. Khatibi questions the effectiveness of both types of nationalism. By conflating these two types of nationalism, Khatibi clearly intimates that Fanon's brand of revolutionary politics is crypto-Fundamentalist.

According to Khatibi, the subject pronoun 'we' of Fanon's address should be situated neither within the circle of Western metaphysics nor within the ambit of Islam's theology, but at the margin of both. Simply put, this pronoun is the subject of a long history of translation. Khatibi is keen to stress that the Islamic civilization was an 'intermediary civilization' which mediated culturally between Hellenism and the Renaissance, between the Roman civilization and medieval Europe, and that it mediated geographically between Europe, Africa, India, and China. Unlike Fanon, Khatibi's project is to open up a face-to-face dialogue between two interrelated metaphysical traditions: Islam and the West. He argues that Islam was a theology of translation and that its spirit was essentially Greek. Implicitly and explicitly, Khatibi laments that this Arabic civilization neglected its Greek heritage and that Islam became theocratic as it lost its faculty to mediate between cultures.

However, the decline of this civilization culminated with its colonization, and Khatibi outlines three trends which sought to decolonize and revive it: traditionalism and *salafism* on the one hand and rationalism on the other. He contends that traditionalism confined metaphysics to the realm of theology, whereas *salafism* reduced metaphysics to doctrinal politics in its attempt to reform a corrupt and decadent Arab world under the yoke of European colonialism. These two trends lost their sense of tradition and forgot their indebtedness to Greek philosophy. This sort of reformism failed to question its theocratic foundation and could not overcome its limitations. Moreover, it remained oblivious to what it considered (and still considers) as a foreign domination: the West. It failed to open up a dialogue with Europe which it situated outside its discourse: an outside which in fact affected and still affects it from within.⁶⁷ He criticizes the *salafism* for adopting technology which is voided of its Western values in order to codify its doctrinal project with religion, a project which would not bring about the necessary reforms for modernization.⁶⁸ He also criticizes rationalism which he uses interchangeably with historicism (or what he calls 'crude Marxism', the kind espoused by Sartre and Fanon). For Khatibi, the work of Abdellah Laroui is a good example of this type of historicism which attributes the decline of the Arabs to colonialism. Laroui denounces the dispossession of the subject by Western

⁶⁷ Ibid. 30.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 31.

colonialism, as well as rebukes traditionalism and *salafism* for reifying history in a nostalgic view of the past.⁶⁹ Khatibi criticizes him for not taking into account what came in between these long continuous moments of history: those moments are characterized by their disjunction, by their disorder, and by their dissymmetry. He also chides Laroui for constructing the subject of history as an Absolute and transparent agency, unaffected by the psychoanalytical notion of the unconscious and by biography in its translation (or rather interpretation) of the narrative of history. Khatibi argues that Laroui posits a totalizing notion of identity without interrogating its metaphysical and philosophical foundations and that this conception of identity bankrupts his historicism.

What Khatibi calls the *Maghreb* (which in Arabic means 'The West') should be a site of non-return to an originary notion of being, a rejection of a society founded on religious theocracy. In his view, the term 'Arab' refers to a civilization whose metaphysics entered its death throes; a civilization which is incapable of reinventing itself without entering this planetary world and undertaking major transformations to accommodate itself with its technology. In the lexis of Khatibi, *technē* assumes the progressive role which translation did have on the development of Islamic civilization. He explores the complex relationship between metaphysics, technology, and decolonization. He acknowledges that technology could have perverse consequences as will to power. Notwithstanding its colonial impetus, he argues, technology is universal and could provide us with a means to the question of being. It is at the core of this relation that he inscribes the pronoun 'we', appropriating this power to decolonize. He remarks that the Orient (the East) is not a metaphor, a moving vehicle towards the West propelled by a dialectical schema or governed by a culturalist or speculative agenda. But these two opposed poles are caught up in the same metaphysics, despite the fact in their interplay one eclipses the other. He argues for an absolute difference (*différence intraitable*), which could be achieved by a double critique, a critique of both. The Maghreb, according to him, is a topographical site which connects the East, the West, and Africa, and in order to modernize itself it should promote the plurality (linguistic, cultural, and political) which characterizes it. It must rethink its relation with its Outside (Europe) to decentre its colonial power; it must also abandon nostalgic notions of identity, the poisonous identitarian discourse on the *açala* (originality); this is with a view to discovering this categorical difference which should speak on behalf of the oppressed.

For Khatibi, it is no longer possible to cling on to the old conception of the *Ouma* as a nostalgic and totalizing notion of identity which held the Arab

⁶⁹ Khatibi (1983) 32.

World together on the basis of a shared language and religion. The *Ouma* is marked by difference: it is linguistically, ethnically, and culturally diverse. To deconstruct this essentialist conception of identity, Khatibi proposes a pluralistic view. He characterizes this view as *ex-centric* and non-transcendental.⁷⁰ Only a pluralistic view of civilization, of languages, of technical and scientific elaborations could help the colonized Arabs decolonize and enter the global scene, and not Fanon's outcry which is, according to Khatibi, the expression of a tortured soul.

Taking his cue from Derrida, Khatibi attempts to provide a double critique which would accommodate difference by incorporating it in the discourse of the West (Europe/Maghreb). His supposition that the West still affects the Islamic tradition from the inside is nonetheless problematic. It overlooks the history and the politics of the translation movements which I have outlined above. As has been suggested, the Western episteme is formed as Western by cutting itself from its historical origins and from its place of emission. This was instituted through what Derrida calls the 'logic of *supplementarity*' which put these historical origins under erasure.⁷¹ These origins were perceived as intrusive, threatening the integrity of the inside. In order to guarantee its internal security Western epistemology shut its door by keeping what it considered as outside influences out. This economy of supplementarity, which funded European colonialism, is at variance with Khatibi's supposition that the West is within the colonized.⁷²

The translation of knowledge into Western culture was not predicated upon an ethics that expressed respect and fidelity to the other. This in/fidelity is bound up with what Derrida calls mourning as 'interiorization of the dead other'.⁷³ To comprehend what is 'kept' through translation, it is important to examine the ambivalent economy of writing as keeping. Derrida contends that in writing there is loss; he calls this a 'loss of memory'—the 'effacement of traces'.⁷⁴ Derrida describes the disjunction between writing as a process of 'ingrammatizing' experience and lived experience as 'interior discourse, interior monologue, interior thinking'.⁷⁵ The gap between the two experiences

⁷⁰ Ibid. 14.

⁷¹ Derrida (1976) 128–33 defines the 'supplement' as 'simple exteriority, pure addition or pure absence'. The supplement represents the excessive character of otherness as evil that has come from the outside to affect and infect the inside. The supplementary economy consists in expelling the supplement by considering it as a dangerous excess. To restore the purity of the inside, the outside must be kept in its place, out; it 'must return to what it should never have ceased to be': a surplus excess.

⁷² Fanon provides an astute psychoanalytical reading of the Manichaeism which marks the psyche of the colonized in *Black Skin, White Masks*. What Khatibi calls Fanon's 'tortured soul' is nothing but the artefact of colonialism.

⁷³ Derrida (1995) 152.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 143.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 144.

can never be articulated; hence Derrida speaks of loss in what remains in writing. This problem is all the more acute in translation, especially in the case of the translation movements discussed above. What has been lost in these translations is, to borrow Derrida's experience, 'a loss without return'.⁷⁶ According to him, keeping is *jouissance*, i.e. 'bliss in which the other is called'. Derrida insists that he 'cannot imagine a living bliss which is not plural, differential'.⁷⁷ However, he warns that keeping everything to oneself is 'death, poisoning, intoxication, turgidity'.⁷⁸ This nauseating and poisonous kind of keeping could be described in Derridean terms as 'the elixir of bad taste',⁷⁹ as an excess of swallowing. Translation as cannibalistic incorporation through assimilation suffers from this excessive swallowing: the vomit of colonialism is nothing but the symptom of intoxication. Khatibi is right to refute the poisonous identitarian discourse on the *açala* (originality). However, he seems to be oblivious to the fact that its baneful manifestation is in fact an adverse side-effect of this intoxication. It is tempting to put Khatibi on his head: colonialism never promoted 'a living bliss' which is plural and differential. Khatibi contends that the West is within the colonized, a view that does not account for the cultural narcissism of the Western tradition, a view that overlooks the rape of their cultural recourses, a view that goes in the opposite direction to the one taken by Meyerhof, who intimates that it is in fact Islam which is at the core of European thought. It is important to reiterate Fanon's point that this thought is colonial. Inside its store what is kept through translation is a dead other.

CONCLUSION

To sum up: I have attempted to adumbrate the two movements of translation which determined and defined Western epistemology. It is my argument that a radical Orientalism advanced the scope of the Humanities: the interaction of the West with the East, the business of translation, the carrying across of knowledge from the East to the West, the movement of the sun from these two respective cultural locations as speculative endeavour is at the origin of what is called the Enlightenment. It is also my argument that this kind of Orientalism at its moment of inception is at variance with the discursive formation Said astutely describes in his seminal work *Orientalism*. This Orientalism represents the activities undertaken by the 'Abbāsids to translate works from Greek and other cultures; it refers to an era in which knowledge flourished. At

⁷⁶ Derrida (1995) 144.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 137.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 149.

⁷⁹ Derrida (1995) 137.

its zenith, Islamic civilization was genuinely a civilization of translation mediating between East and West, between the classical and our modern age. Western tradition assimilated without mediating the greatness of this civilization. It voided that which was significant in this civilization.

What is perceived as Muslim fanaticism pertains to a different era, it 'belong[s] to a subsequent age, when Islam's civilization had sunk to dust and its creed had become transformed by Ash'arite theology'.⁸⁰ Europe tended to dwell on this fanaticism and underplayed the contribution of this civilization. 'The debt of Europe to the "heathen dog" could, of course, find no place in the scheme of Christian history,' writes Briffault, 'and the garbled falsification has imposed itself on all subsequent conceptions.'⁸¹ Briffault laments the fact that medieval history gives this civilization no more than 'an off-hand and patronizing recognition'. This history is rewritten with the sole intention of celebrating 'the triumphs of the Cross over the Crescent' and 'the reclamation of Spain from the Moorish yoke'.⁸² Briffault reminds us that '[i]t was under the influence of the Arabian and Moorish revival of culture, not in the fifteenth century, that the real Renaissance took place. Spain, not Italy, was the cradle of the rebirth of Europe.'⁸³

The Graeco-Arabic translation movement represented an epochal stage in the history of the Humanities and in the advancement of knowledge. Indeed, as Gutas argues, it deserves the same recognition as that given to 'Pericles' Athens, the Italian Renaissance, or the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it deserves so to be recognized and embedded in our historical consciousness'.⁸⁴ Arguably, this movement not merely preserved and guaranteed the survival of Greek thought, but it came to define the very classicism upon which the Europe of the Enlightenment founded modernity.

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⁸⁰ Briffault (1938) 184.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 189.

⁸² *Ibid.* ⁸³ *Ibid.* 188.

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Classic Simplicity

Fred Parker

Every translation of a classic text strikes its own balance between the claims of the original and the present reality of the modern. It may aspire to a near-literal fidelity, reaching back in time; it may seek after an equivalence of terms that can mediate between two worlds; it may, deliberately or unconsciously, appropriate the ancient text to a thoroughly modern idiom, meaning, or set of concerns. But however the balance is struck, once the consciousness of such a spectrum of possibility attaches itself to the original it alters the conditions of its reception, complicating the endeavour to draw on the classic as the site and source of value.

In a historical view, the eighteenth century may be seen as a kind of fulcrum or turning-point in the balance of power between classic and modern. For it is the period in which the sense of genuine intimacy with the great classical authors was increasingly subject to, yet not altogether displaced by, the historical self-consciousness of modernity. A helpful historical marker for this, if we want one, is the controversy between ‘Ancients’ and ‘Moderns’ that travelled from France to England in the last years of the seventeenth century. Joseph Levine has characterized this as a conflict between classical rhetoric and classical philology:¹ between, on the one hand, an older tradition of absorption in the classic as a deeply congenial model, whose imitation is a practice of evident educative value; and on the other, a newly acute understanding of the classical as *different*, as culturally distant, perhaps to be illuminated through scholarship, but not to be grasped through empathy.

As the site of value, the classic calls for imitation; but with this new historical self-consciousness on the scene, the practice of imitation could no longer be pursued with the same directness. When Pope et al. played the ‘Augustan’ card, they were *both* claiming a close affinity with the Roman poets who wrote under Augustus *and* ironically remarking the distance between original and version, between that world and this. In Pope’s *Imitations of*

¹ Levine (1991) 46 and *passim*.

Horace, this double consciousness is made manifest on the page: Horace's Latin is laid alongside Pope's English, and what the reader apprehends as translation is not the English text in itself but the play of relations between the two.² Even Pope's pointed departures from Horace, as when he asserts his personal sincerity or his political independence, depend for their point on the presence of that relationship, and are therefore not as unequivocally sincere or as absolutely independent as they seem. This 'both/and' consciousness is at the heart of Augustan translation, but it is a delicate balance, not easy to sustain: Pope's interlocutor in the *Epilogue to the Satires* cannot manage it:

Why now, this moment, don't I see you steal?
 'Tis all from *Horace*: *Horace* long before ye
 Said, 'Tories call'd him Whig, and Whigs a Tory' . . .
 But *Horace*, Sir, was delicate, was nice;
Bubo observes, he lash'd no sort of *Vice*:
Horace would say, Sir Billy serv'd the Crown,
 Blunt could do Bus'ness, H-ggins knew the Town . . .
 His sly, polite, insinuating stile
 Could please at Court, and make AUGUSTUS smile.³

This is to allege first that Pope duplicates his original, and then that he loses touch with its finesse: but the speaker is wrong both times, deaf to the poised, witty, complex self-consciousness which frames the very complaints he makes.

This complex, 'Augustan' consciousness found a natural affinity with the Roman poets, themselves the conscious imitators of the originating achievement of the Greeks. *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit*, in Horace's famous summary: in the field of the arts, Greece conquered its savage conqueror, and civilized the rough and rustic Latin language—yet, Horace adds, *manent vestigia ruris*, traces of that native rusticity still remain.⁴ This residual resistance to cultural assimilation—a corollary of the implausibility of total translation—is formally regretted, yet also secretly rejoiced in, a guarantee of native integrity (like Pope's failure to be fully 'insinuating'), and a way of preserving sufficient distance between the parties for real *relations* to be possible. Intrinsic to this model of translation is the view of the foreign classic as the civilizing power: the newly complex self-consciousness which the imperative of translation then induces in the rustic receiving culture palpably adds to its resources.

The English Augustans sometimes construed their relation to the French classics of the *grand siècle* in this way. But across the fulcrum of the eighteenth century, the balance was tipping towards a cultural self-perception, not as

² For fine analysis, see Stack (1985).

³ Pope (1953) 298–9.

⁴ Horace (1978) *Epistles* 2. 1. 155–60.

rough and rustic, but as polished, civilized (all-too-civilized), and *late*. The classic, accordingly, becomes the early. Johnson, for example, although no friend to primitivism, noted how frequently ‘the most ancient poets are considered as the best. . . . It is commonly observed that the early writers are in possession of nature, and their followers of art.’⁵ The value in the classic text that this brought newly into focus was the value of *simplicity*—a quality found pre-eminently in the Greek rather than the Roman writers, and above all in Homer, the most ancient poet of all, and the master-text in any discourse of the classic. ‘This pure and noble Simplicity is no where in such Perfection as in the *Scripture* and our Author,’ declared Pope in the preface to his translation of the *Iliad*.⁶ Noble simplicity—a fusion of qualities which present themselves as opposites to the modern consciousness—became the hallmark of classic value.

Pope does not, on the whole, historicize this simplicity, but it was only a short further step to see Homer’s poetry as embedded in his culture. Writing in 1735, Thomas Blackwell was among the first to feel no need to play down or apologize for the ‘primitive’ elements. On the contrary, it was Homer’s life as an itinerant bard that made possible his representation of ‘*natural* and *simple Manners*’. This representation gives enormous pleasure, and also great moral benefit:

It is irresistible and enchanting; they best shew human Wants and Feelings; they give us back the Emotions of an *artless* Mind, and the plain Methods we fall upon to indulge them: Goodness and Honesty have their Share in the Delight; for we begin to like the Men, and wou’d rather have to do with them, than with more refined but *double* Characters.⁷

This quality of desirable simplicity is a quality not only of the world Homer represents, but also of the language in which he represents it: simple manners, Blackwell insisted,

have a peculiar Effect upon the Language, not only as they are natural, but as they are ingenuous and *good*. While a Nation continues simple and sincere, whatever they say has a *Weight* from *Truth*: Their Sentiments are strong and honest; which always produce fit Words to express them: Their Passions are sound and genuine, not adulterated or disguised, and break out in their own artless Phrase and unaffected Stile. They are not accustomed to the *Prattle*, and little pretty *Forms* that enervate a polished Speech.⁸

These perceptions of Homer have evident reference to their own cultural moment. Recent work on canon-formation in the eighteenth century has emphasized a distinctively modern unease with modernity, a deepening

⁵ Johnson (1990) 39–40.

⁶ Pope (1967) vii. 18.

⁷ Blackwell (1735) 24.

⁸ *Ibid.* 55.

shadow to the period's official self-image as a time of progress and enlightenment. This generated a redescription of the English classics, according to which Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton were increasingly valued for their remoteness, their *antiquity*.⁹ In a similar way, Blackwell's praise of the wonderful Homeric simplicity sharply opposes it to the 'doubleness' and artifice of his own time and culture.

To perceive the classic in this way made its transposition into modern terms fraught with difficulty. It is a potentially depressive position that tends towards a sense of inadequacy, belatedness, or loss. The passages from Blackwell quoted above waver between the rejuvenating and the nostalgic: exposure to Homer arouses a sense of 'goodness and honesty' that seems to close the ethical gap between then and now, and yet Homer's achievement is bound up with a way of life and a pristine soundness of language surely irrecoverable. Irrecoverable, that is, except in the literary experience. Representations of natural and simple manners, says Blackwell, *give us back* the emotions of an artless mind: in this way of thinking, the classic text is a magic portal into a world of value otherwise inaccessible and lost. It is an elevating conception of the classic, but one that threatens to lift it altogether out of reach of translation, which must live in two worlds, or build bridges between them. Blackwell's Homer can redeem us from our modernity, can give us back our lost simplicity—but only while we are reading, and, it would seem, reading in the original, for Blackwell writes always as having total access to the original, a reader for whom mediation is simply not an issue. Pope, he says in passing, 'has taught *Homer* to speak *English* incomparably better than any Language but his *own*',¹⁰ but he never quotes Pope's Homer or discusses it.

There is a much-cited anecdote, according to which Bentley, the great classical scholar, delivered himself of the put-down, 'It is a pretty poem, Mr Pope: but you must not call it *Homer*.'¹¹ This gives the misleading impression that Pope offered his translation as perfectly transparent, a perfect substitute for the original, only then to be caught out by the expert. In fact, Pope's *Iliad* presents itself as intensely translation-conscious, alert to cultural difference and to the problematics of translation. In his preface Pope writes of the Homeric simplicity as a quality almost impossibly difficult to preserve in translation. He evokes its quality mainly through negatives. 'Nothing that belongs to *Homer* seems to have been more commonly mistaken than the just Pitch of his Style: Some of his Translators having swell'd into Fustian . . . others sunk into Flatness . . . There is a *graceful* and *dignify'd* Simplicity, as well as a *bald* and *sordid* one.'¹² What Pope did in his translation was to find an

⁹ Kramnick (1998).

¹⁰ Blackwell (1735) 325.

¹¹ Johnson (1905) iii. 213 n.

¹² Pope (1967) vii. 18.

eighteenth-century idiom for that ‘dignified simplicity’ in so far as the condition of his own language and culture would allow him to do so; in so far as it would not, to err on the side of dignity and elegance rather than meanness and flatness; and continually to signal (especially in his footnotes) areas where Homer was particularly startling to eighteenth-century norms, or most imperfectly represented by Pope’s English. He refuses both horns of the dilemma offered by the recent French translators: Mme Dacier, whose reverence for the original confined her to prose simplicity, and La Motte, who produced a modern *Iliad*, heavily cut and freely rewritten, in twelve books of confidently contemporary verse.¹³ Pope’s translation, instead, offers itself as the record of a relationship, of a various and multifaceted response to the impact of Homer, in which the balancing of power between original and modern is continually in process, never settled.¹⁴

Such consciousness of difference might well be intrinsic to any act of translation: but it has a peculiar piquancy when the source text is valued for its special quality of simplicity. On the one hand, is simplicity not bound to be jeopardized when the reader is made alert, in that quintessentially ‘Augustan’ way, to the play of differences between then and now, between original and translation? On the other, what could be more transmissible, more likely to transcend cultural and linguistic difference, than classic simplicity? Discussing Pope’s Homer, Johnson cites the testimony of a reader without Greek who, approaching Homer through a literal Latin crib, found ‘that from the rude simplicity of the lines literally rendered, he formed nobler ideas of the Homeric majesty, than from the laboured elegance of polished versions.’ Yet Johnson does not finally endorse that approach, but—in what is very much an instance of both/and—lavishes his praise on Pope’s version. He acknowledges this to be a sophisticated rendering, in both senses (Pope sophisticates pure Homer with ‘Ovidian graces’, Augustan poet that he is), and concedes that a classical scholar could object that ‘Pope’s version of Homer is not Homeric . . . it wants his awful simplicity, his artless grandeur.’ But such an objection, although strictly accurate, would be foolish, since ‘Pope wrote for his own age and his own nation’, in a post-classic time when ‘mere nature would be endured no longer.’¹⁵ There can be no going back. Classic simplicity is jeopardized by the necessity of writing for a modern, sophisticated audience: and translation-consciousness sophisticates us all.

Many eighteenth-century admirers of the classics, and of Homer in particular, found this position unpersuasive. Those who found the classic simplicity too

¹³ See Simonsuuri (1979) 48–51.

¹⁴ The best study is still Mason (1972).

¹⁵ Johnson (1905) iii. 239–40.

badly compromised by Pope's practice, unwilling to pay the price that translation requires, sought to return in some way to the authenticity of the original. One way of meeting this desire was provided by Macpherson's fraudulent *Poems of Ossian*, a pseudo-translation in lyrical English prose of non- or barely-existent bardic originals supposedly composed in Gaelic in the Dark Ages. The strongly accentuated simplicity of the writing has not worn well, but in its time it enjoyed sensational success, and was for the second half of the century what Pope's *Iliad* had been for the first: the most influential poetical work of the time (and often explicitly ranked with Homer). Here, uniquely, was a 'translation' that was perfectly transparent, for it mediated nothing but itself; its readers found in these texts that the noble simplicity of the remote past was miraculously fresh and accessible, simultaneously ancient and contemporary.

Another way of rejecting Pope's legacy was to urge that English—English poetry, and ultimately English culture generally—must be reformed so as to become congenial to Greek simplicity. Let us not be Augustans, let us be Hellenists, was the motto here; this meant undoing Pope's sophistication by establishing a new direction for English poetry that could more truly strike the classic note. Thus Collins, in 'The Passions. An Ode to Music':

O bid our vain endeavours cease,
Revive the just designs of Greece,
Return in all thy simple state!
Confirm the tales her sons relate!¹⁶

In the same volume Collins's 'Ode to Simplicity' personifies Simplicity as 'a decent maid | In Attic robe arrayed';¹⁷ as a properly modest Greek woman, she has no interest in fancy clothes, 'the wealth of art'. Although himself far from artless, Collins suggests an idea of artless simplicity by various means: his preference for the ode (in this handling, a form suited to natural effusion, rather than the stance of comparative reflection and discrimination native to the Popean couplet), his fondness for timeless personification allegory, unencumbered by the contemporary (a hazy association of Greekness with Platonism plays its part here), and the absence of allusion or imitation, such as would generate the kind of translation-consciousness incompatible with 'simple state'. These are characteristics he shares with a number of other mid-century Hellenophile poets, including Akenside and the Warton brothers; there was a first flurry of these publications soon after Pope's death, when there was no danger that their authors could be pilloried in the next edition of the *Dunciad*, and the call for classic simplicity, thus construed, was in large part a reaction against Pope and Pope's way of mediating the classics.

¹⁶ Lonsdale (1969) 485.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 424.

Later in the century, Cowper became the most eloquent defender of Homer against Pope:

Scriptural poetry excepted, I believe that there is not to be found in the world poetry so simple as his. Is it thus with his translator? I answer, No, but exactly the reverse. . . . The famous simile at the end of the 8th book, in which the fires kindled in the Trojan camp are compared to the moon and stars in a clear night, may serve as a specimen of what I blame. In Homer it consists of five lines; in Pope, of twelve. I may be told, perhaps, that the translation is nevertheless beautiful, and I do not deny it; but I must beg leave to think that it would have been more beautiful, had it been more compressed. At least I am sure that Homer's close is most to be commended. He says, simply, The shepherd's heart is glad;—a plain assertion, which in Pope is rendered thus:

The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.

Where the word *conscious* seems to be joined with *swain*, merely by right of ancient prescription, and where the blessing is perfectly gratuitous, Homer having mentioned no such matter. . . . The simplicity, the almost divine simplicity, of Homer is worth more than all the glare and glitter that can be contrived.¹⁸

Cowper makes an irresistible case that Pope has transposed the original into other and more elaborate terms. But his implied corollary—that this is reprehensible, and that by stripping away the glare and glitter we must get closer to the real thing—is not so secure. Cowper went on to produce his own corrective translation of Homer, but his version of this passage, like the translation in general, is unsuccessful by any criterion: mostly dull and prosaic, yet forfeiting the clarity of good prose by its intermittent compensatory gestures towards a weakly Miltonic register. His original poetry is very much better than this. The failure of his Homer illustrates a general principle: rendering classic texts in ultra-plain English does not release the noble simplicity locked into the original, but tends only towards flatness or pseudo-primitive archaism or a general effect of simple-mindedness.

Still, it was shrewd of Cowper to pick on that particular passage by Pope, with its pastoral note and its rendering of Homer's shepherds as 'conscious swains'. 'Swain' is a stylizing term, which even in Pope's time could not be used without consciousness of that fact, a consciousness which seems here to extend to the shepherds, who do not simply feel emotion in response to the dawn but are *conscious* of and in their feeling. Even Pope's shepherds are reflective Augustans—whereas in Cowper what does the feeling is the shepherd's *heart*, an organ as far away from consciousness as may be, not reflective but itself *fons et origo*. The choice of shepherd's sensibility as battleground is

¹⁸ Cowper (1986) v. 54–7.

significant, for the special simplicity of pastoral life and pastoral writing—teasingly poised between literary fiction and hypothetical reality—presented itself as a way of giving substance to, of realizing, the simplicity of the classics. If one could not have Ancient Greek as a mother-tongue, the next best thing might be to read pastoral, and think of country life. Thus, for example, Collins seeks his Muse of Attic Simplicity in a vale where he hopes to sound his reed to maids and shepherds:¹⁹ the effect of imbibing the Greek aesthetic will be to make him a pastoral poet.

The work which most influentially associated Homeric simplicity with the simplicity of pastoral was *Télémaque*, or *The Adventures of Telemachus, Son of Ulysses*, by Fénelon. ‘When the ancient poets wanted to charm the imagination of men’, wrote Fénelon, ‘they conducted them far from the great cities; they made them forget the luxury of their time, and led them back to the age of gold; they represented shepherds dancing on the flowery grass in the shade of a grove.’²⁰ Such a Golden Age may seem irrecoverable or unreal, but there is a genuine reforming intention in the pastoralism of *Télémaque*. When Telemachus hears about the blissful life in the country of Bétique, whose inhabitants are ‘simple in their manners and happy in that simplicity’, his response cautions us against the assumption that such a way of life is *necessarily* a fiction. ‘To such a degree are we spoiled and corrupted, that we can hardly believe that a simplicity so agreeable to nature is anywhere to be found. We regard the morals of such a people as entertaining fables; and they, on their part, must regard ours as a monstrous dream.’²¹ Bétique may be utopian: but by the end of the book the wise Mentor/Minerva has largely succeeded in reforming the real-world country of Salente, de-urbanizing it and transforming it into ‘a fruitful well-cultivated country, and a city in which there is a simplicity of manners, and not much magnificence.’²² This faith in the possibility of translating such desirable simplicity of life into the modern world—without much magnificence: that is, translating it without much transposition, without much sophistication—gained its power to convince from the poise of sophistication and *naïveté* in Fénelon’s writing. But what really underwrote this persuasiveness was the notion that the limpid simplicity of Fénelon’s vision and language had successfully transmitted the original simplicity of Homer; the literary achievement and the social vision seemed mutually corroborative. Successful transmission of classic simplicity: this was the philosopher’s stone of translation, and for a while it seemed that Fénelon had found it. Richard Steele could write, uncontroversially, that ‘The Story of *Telemachus* is formed altogether in the Spirit of *Homer*, and will give an

¹⁹ Lonsdale (1969) 427.

²⁰ Fénelon (1994) p. xvi.

²¹ *Ibid.* 114.

²² *Ibid.* 295–6.

unlearned Reader a Notion of that great Poet's Manner of Writing, more than any Translation of him can possibly do.²³

Against this hopeful view, that the simplicity of pastoral can provide magically direct access to the source of classic value, may be set what I have been calling the Augustan insistence: in the post-classic consciousness simplicity wears a different face. In its most general form, this might be stated: representation (of which translation is, perhaps, the type) is never transparent, never revelation of the thing itself. There is an early essay by Pope which memorably makes this point. The occasion was the publication of his *Pastorals*, which came out at the same time as those by Ambrose Philips. Pope's are consciously imitative poems, full of classical echoes; Philips, however, gestures towards rural realism, in a mode crudely akin to genre painting. At the time of their publication, Pope submitted to *The Guardian* an anonymous review-essay, which appeared to praise Philips at the expense of Pope. The irony turns, with delicious malice, on the ambiguous nature of 'simplicity':

As Simplicity is the distinguishing Characteristick of Pastoral, *Virgil* hath been thought guilty of too Courtly a Stile; his Language is perfectly pure, and he often forgets that he is among Peasants. . . . Mr *Pope* hath fallen into the same Error with *Virgil*. His Clowns do not converse in all the Simplicity proper to the Country: His Names are borrow'd from *Theocritus* and *Virgil*. . . .

With what Simplicity [Philips] introduces two Shepherds singing alternately.

Hobb. Come, Rosalind, O come, for without thee
 What pleasure can the country have for me?
 Come, Rosalind, O come; my brinded kine,
 My snowy sheep, my farm and all, is thine. . . .

Our other Pastoral Writer, in expressing the same Thought, deviates into downright Poetry.

Streph. In Spring the Fields, in Autumn Hills I love,
 At Morn the Plains, at Noon the shady Grove,
 But Delia always; forced from Delia's Sight,
 Nor Plains at Morn, nor Groves at Noon delight. . . .

[Whereas Philips offers us this] *beautiful Rusticity*. . . .

O woful Day! O Day of Woe, quoth he,
 And woful I, who live the Day to see!

That Simplicity of Diction, the Melancholy Flowing of the Numbers, the Solemnity of the Sound, and the easie Turn of the Words in this *Dirge* (to make use of our Author's Expression) are extremely Elegant.²⁴

²³ Bond (1987) ii. 373.

²⁴ Stephens (1982) 160–3.

Pope here acknowledges himself guilty—along with Virgil—of sophisticating original simplicity, ‘deviating’ from it by translating it into something else (namely, poetry). Philips’s ‘*beautiful Rusticity*’, by contrast, is clearly both painfully simple-minded and, despite itself, hopelessly literary: ‘extremely Elegant’ nails this last point with precision. To pursue simplicity *directly* is to chase the rainbow: that is the Augustan emphasis: the modern is necessarily in some degree alienated from the source of original value, and whether that source be the noble simplicity of Homer or the noble simplicity of country life, the dimension of translation remains. And of course that emphasis is beautifully reinforced by the wicked, disingenuous irony with which Pope’s essay is written: only a simpleton could be taken in by its simplicity.

For the strongest of counter-statements to Pope, which will help to show what is at stake in this argument, we may go at the other end of the century to Wordsworth’s preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. This is dedicated to an aesthetic by which Pope stands condemned. Wordsworth was to write elsewhere of how Pope ‘wandered from humanity’ in his *Pastorals*; how the success of those poems ‘tempted him into a belief that Nature was not to be trusted’; and how his celebrated moonlight passage from the *Iliad*, ‘though he had Homer to guide him’, is ‘throughout false and contradictory’.²⁵ However, Wordsworth’s sense of what poetry should be, as expressed in the preface, is inspired by just that idea of noble simplicity hitherto associated with the classics—but now transferred entirely to country life. I quote the 1802 text:

Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under constraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated.²⁶

The task of the poet, Wordsworth argues, is to identify with these elementary feelings so absolutely that he may communicate them with complete transparency, without—to use Pope’s expression—‘deviating into poetry’. Wordsworth’s attack on poetic diction in the appendix essentially repeats Pope’s mock-preference for Philips’s aesthetic, but with Pope’s irony neutralized. Indeed, Wordsworth has some lines in the ballads—‘O misery! O misery! | O woe is me! O misery!’—that may well recall lines by Philips mocked by Pope.

But Wordsworth cannot fairly be so mocked, for he sees the full force of the Augustan objection to his procedure, and rejects it with great clarity. What is interesting is that he should frame that rejection as a rejection of the analogy with translation:

²⁵ Wordsworth (1974) ii. 72–3.

²⁶ *Ibid.* i. 125.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who deems himself justified when he substitutes excellences of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair.²⁷

The true poet must not stand in that relation to the elementary feelings which are his subject, which Pope stood in to Homer. He must not settle for the role of translator. And Wordsworth tells us why not, in striking terms: to do so would lead to despair. Why 'despair'? From what point of view might Pope appear as a poet in despair? The answer is, surely, that the poet who accepts the role of translator has given up hope of simplicity, and can never wholly return to, never fully identify himself with, the source of original value. For Pope this lay in Homer; for Wordsworth it is often Cumbria that is classic ground; but the situations are parallel. And the alternative? Wordsworth sees very deep here, for he does not suppose that he can simply succeed where Pope turned aside. He comes close to conceding the truth of the Augustan premise: that it is impossible 'to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests'. What remains for Wordsworth, refusing to turn translator, is that he dwell on those moments of impossibility and on the powerfully felt absence which they generate. Much of Wordsworth's most impressive poetry is concerned with absence or loss or some crucial failure or rupture of sympathetic identification; this is true both at the level of subject-matter—adult narrative consciousness feeling its alienation from childhood or rural simplicity—and at the level of expression, where the poetry is often most moving when least expressive, most powerful at moments when representation fails: thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. This is the poetry of loss: poetry, one might say, that mourns the absence of its (classic) origin: recovering the true source of the melancholy in *Ossian*, a translation without an original, an orphan text. And loss mourned, even if it cannot perfectly know or commemorate what is lost, is not the same thing as despair, for in some sense mourning holds to that which is lost, and affirms the power of endurance. (The supreme example in Wordsworth is 'Michael: A Pastoral Poem'.)

This situation of post-classic bereavement is most fully explored in a famous mid-century poem: Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'. For all its manifest Englishness, the Elegy is also a strongly classicizing poem, powerfully assimilating its rich classical echoes and resonances to its English setting.²⁸ The

²⁷ (Ibid. 139).

²⁸ See the commentary in Lonsdale (1969) 103–41.

substitution in the final version of Hampden, Milton, and Cromwell for Cato, Tully, and Caesar in draft, nicely symbolizes the poem's suggestion of a smooth passage between Rome and England, equivalent worlds which allow of direct translation. The Elegy has always been felt to achieve a grand simplicity of utterance; the lapidary completeness of such superbly quotable lines as 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave'²⁹ have made it an English classic, *the* classic poem of its century. This classic simplicity is, in the poem, locked into the simplicity of rural life, in ways with which we are already familiar: the classical and the rural both speak to us of that which persists and endures. But at the same time, this simplicity is invested with a sense of imperfect mediation, imperfect transmission. The poet-speaker is a sympathetic yet alien figure in the village community, a solitary contemplative marked out by Melancholy, and crucially someone who, unlike the average villager, can read an epitaph, and can think in terms of poetry. He is a figure of consciousness, then, whose very awareness of the simple rightness and latent spiritual grandeur in village life marks also his own separateness from it: something which renders tenuous in the extreme any notion that that spiritual grandeur might be fully *realized*, might become fully manifest to consciousness. At the heart of the poem is the connection of value with latency, the idea of potential unrealized, significance unexpressed. This plays out in the concern with continuance and survival—what will survive of the villagers' lives after those lives are over?—and this in turn relates to, and makes its comment on, the continuance of classical literature within the poem's consciousness. Gray's strongest classical allusion comes when he imagines an absence: how the dead will never return to the world of the living.

The cock's shrill clarion or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.³⁰

For those with a classical education, this is immediately recognizable as a free translation of a famous passage on death in Lucretius. 'No longer now will your happy home give you welcome, no longer will your best of wives and sweet children race to win the first kisses.'³¹ So the moment when the classic past is most visibly present and reanimated in the poem is balanced against, and rendered acutely poignant by, the most intense feeling of non-survival. The past is vivid in returning no more. All this is marvellously conveyed in the image of the churchyard itself. The tombstones and their inscriptions express

²⁹ See the commentary in Lonsdale (1969) 124.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 121–2.

³¹ *Ibid.* 121n.

the unquenchable human desire for continuance, recognition, memorialization—just as the poet at the end of the poem allows himself to imagine his own epitaph being read by ‘some kindred spirit’.³² It is a desire that the poet-figure shares, then, with the rustics: it is the common ground beneath their difference. And it is also, of course, the desire served by the idea of the classic: a text which survives down the generations, and in which we find our kinship with the dead. Yet the tombstones set up both to embody this desire and to satisfy it, are no more than a ‘frail memorial’; they are a poor substitute for the truly classical:

Yet even these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply.³³

These all-too-simple inscriptions *supply the place* of fame and elegy: they are both versions of, and substitutes for, the classical. Gray is enough of an Augustan to accept the necessity of translation: his poem acknowledges its affiliation to two different worlds, and accepts that what would elsewhere be truly classical (in ancient Rome, or on a tomb in Westminster Abbey) must, here, in this time and place, be spelt by the unlettered muse: but he feels the loss involved, the inadequacy of such markers to communicate the realities they represent, no less powerfully than Wordsworth. The deepest note in the complex music of the Elegy is its great lament for all that can never be transmitted.

But I am reluctant to allow Gray the last word. Such general conclusions about the translation of classic simplicity as arise from this brief sketch, need not point only towards the vulnerability and inadequacy of the enterprise. True, it is doubtful whether such simplicity can ever be transmitted pristine and entire: sophistication is built into reception, into the post-classic consciousness of modernity. No Rousseauvian affirmation of the simple life will rid us of the doubleness in our being which translation both elicits and addresses. The mediation of simplicity is no simple matter; it is understandable that Wordsworth, in purist mood, should want to turn his back on the whole affair. But this returns us to what the purist would reject: the ‘Augustan’ cast of mind, by which translation puts us into relation with that simplicity which we cannot possess. We can take our cue here from Swift’s encouragement to a fellow-writer: ‘I should be glad to see you the Instrument of

³² Ibid. 135.

³³ Ibid. 132.

introducing into our Style that Simplicity which is the best and truest Ornament of most Things in Life, which the politer Ages always aimed at in their Building and Dress, (*Simplex munditiis*) as well as their Productions of Wit.³⁴ *Simplex munditiis* (approximately, ‘simple in your elegance/ornaments’: a teasing phrase)³⁵ is how Horace describes Pyrrha in *Odes* 1.5. Pyrrha (a Greek name) is a dangerous flirt, perhaps a *femme fatale*, and those young lovers who suppose that they can possess her absolutely, hoping for *fidelity*, will come to grief: Horace, however, who has survived shipwreck in the past, knows to reconcile appreciativeness with distance. It is a wonderfully suggestive poem for Swift to think of in this connection, and something of Horace’s un-simple response to simplicity is picked up in Swift’s own phrasing: simplicity as ‘ornament’ (though ‘truest ornament’), and as that which the politer ages ‘aimed at’ (rather than possessed).

We feel we possess classic simplicity only, perhaps, while we intone the words of the original. The moment we begin to translate, to enquire how such foreign simplicity speaks to our own condition, to become conscious of relations . . . complication appears. This is, however, something quite different from implying that such simplicity is an illusion, a mere projection of need by a culture burdened by its own complexity. Pope was engaged with something more substantial in the *Iliad* than chasing his own shadow. The sense that the value of the classic text—of one kind of classic, at least—is expressed in its special simplicity, and that this simplicity calls out to us for imitation, for response, for translation, is not a quirk of eighteenth-century self-doubt, but belongs to the long tradition of classicism—it might almost be said to define that tradition—from Ben Jonson to T. S. Eliot (and beyond). ‘A condition of complete simplicity | (Costing not less than everything)’ is how Eliot thinks of the state of grace, spiritual and linguistic, in *Little Gidding*.³⁶ For Eliot, the classic poet who embodies such a quality is Dante. He writes of ‘the simplicity of Dante’ and the ‘surprising’ way that Dante’s poetry is ‘extremely easy to read’, and he contrasts this special ‘lucidity’ of style—‘the word is lucid, or rather translucent’—with the different beauty of ‘opacity’ which enters into European languages with the Renaissance, an associative richness which carries ‘a kind of local self-consciousness.’³⁷ The idiom here is Eliot’s, but the fundamental stance, and the challenge it implies for translation, would

³⁴ Bond (1987) iii. 195.

³⁵ English translations have covered the whole range of possibility, from Fanshawe’s ‘un-painted fair’ and Milton’s ‘plain in thy neatness’, across the eighteenth-century fulcrum through Francis’s ‘dressed with careless art’ and Smart’s ‘whose plainness is the pink of taste’, all the way to the recent version by Hecht, ‘slip into something simple by, say, Gucci’.

³⁶ Eliot (1969) 198.

³⁷ Eliot (1951) 238–42.

have seemed familiar enough to Pope. And one may imagine Pope nodding in recognition at Eliot's account of what it feels like to meet the classic in the moment of translation. It comes in the passage in *Little Gidding* which itself closely recalls Dante's encounter, in *Inferno* 15, with his own dead master.

And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
 That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
 The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
 I caught the sudden look of some dead master
 Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
 Both one and many; in the brown baked features
 The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
 Both intimate and unidentifiable.
 So I assumed a double part, and cried
 And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?'
 Although we were not. I was still the same,
 Knowing myself yet being someone other—
 And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed
 To compel the recognition they preceded.³⁸

What Eliot's dead master has to tell him is that 'last season's fruit is eaten': the message from the past is of its non-survival. 'For last year's words belong to last year's language | And next year's words await another voice.' And yet: in that very fact of otherness and difference, not despite but because of the doubleness it induces, there lies the possibility of a true encounter.

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Raising the Dead: Marlowe's Lucan

Dan Hooley

'The Classic', it will be readily apparent, is an impossible collocation. Not only is there no singular (there have been many 'classics'), the word itself is wildly variable in application. Classic cars, classic films, classic Motown, classic cottages, classic mysteries, classic comics, classic rock, instant classics, classics in the bookshop (not the same as in the academic catalogue), and on indefinitely. And that's not to consider the other adjectival form, 'classical', with its own set of associations. But this volume is about literature, and that helps to close focus—a bit. Thinking through literary classics back through those many other classics, one might notice a not entirely inconsistent implication of timelessness or durability through time. Classic style in general, as it applies to cars, music, clothing, and much else, may have this consistency. Yet there is the implication, too, of the retro in all this. A classic dress or suit or auto may be acceptable, even prized in certain contexts (posh soirées, law firms, auto rallies), but is still a niche currency, apart from the norm, the *really* contemporary. Hence, a suggestion of the quaint: decorous, restrained, polished, perhaps even (discreetly) beautiful, a little normative but harmlessly so because no longer really with us.

Some, to be sure, would argue the contrary. Car buffs might claim the 1952 Jaguar C-Type is always cool, so preserving, as well, the currency of that 1950s adjective. Others unapologetically claim that classic literature is *always* with us: 'Shakespeare our contemporary'.¹ Yet others, following the late, conservative turn in politics into literature, seem to rally around the notion of the classic in literature and other things, hoping for a recovery of an earlier day when canonical texts (and other things) seemed to stand for the solid values of stable and, in T. S. Eliot's term, 'mature' civilization.² This deeper, cultural 'classicism' (for want of a better noun) arguably might be said to be perennially relevant, at least so long as we can clearly see a thing called 'Western civiliza-

¹ The title of Jan Kott's 'classic' 1964 study.

² Eliot in Kermode (1975*b*) 115–31.

tion' with definitive, originary foundations. But again as in the case of the noun/adjective's more general uses, these cases of cool or relevance, on the face of it at least, turn on the notion of locking value into something 'past' that retains its appeal for a selected minority of contemporary people. I, for one, think Eliot's definitive, classic writers Virgil and Dante eminently cool (I am less keen about the cars). But far the majority of our fellows on this planet have never heard of them, and don't care to. In fact, as has been evident to even those of us in the sheltered academy, the notion of 'Western civilization' as Eliot understood it, is a quickly disappearing illusion. For some others of us, then, particularly those less enthusiastic about the aggressive imperialism implicit in Eliot's vision, a fitting image for the classic (to recall a favourite topos from Fitz Hugh Lane and other American 'luminist' landscape painters³) might be the spent and broken hull of a ruined frigate, half-sunk, before the shores of the New World—relic of the Great European Day now behind us, its old arrogance perhaps muted by a touch of the picturesque.⁴ Or maybe Yeats's 'Body of the Father Christian Rosencrucx', his figure for the artistic imagination, wrapped in 'noble raiment and laid . . . in a tomb containing the symbols of all things in heaven and earth', whose 'wizard lips are closed, or but opened for the complaining of some melancholy and ghostly voice'.⁵

These readings of Eliot's classic are closural images, end-game figures conveying, roughly, 'a sense'—to bring Frank Kermode into the picture—'of ending'.⁶ Perhaps they are too pessimistic. Kermode himself when he addressed the status and nature of the classic specifically, took a more positive tack, reconceptualizing Eliot's classic in different terms.⁷ Observing how the classic somehow suggests transcendence of the imperatives of time, history, or mortality, his rereading of Eliot's vision of a cultural *imperium sine fine* locks the classic's durability into the revisionary responses of each new day. The notion goes some distance towards explaining the perennial popularity of some classics: Shakespeare in the Park plays on; the New Globe still packs the pit. Yet the particular, if not peculiar, kind of attention the classic commands—not the same as that accorded contemporary work—could prompt one to entertain the proposition that one peculiar feature of the classic is its embodying a substantial paradox. Put simply, that proposition is that the classic somehow speaks, in more or less popular venues, to audiences whose

³ Beyond Lane (1804–65), Frederick E. Church (1826–1900), Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823–1900), Martin J. Heade (1819–1904), and John F. Kensett (1816–72) were other notable Luminists, described thus for their use of light in their landscapes.

⁴ Lane's *Brace's Rock, Eastern Point, Gloucester* portrays (in a few versions) one such abandoned craft, listing to the side on a picturesque, rocky coast. Frederick Edwin Church's *The Wreck* is another example.

⁵ Yeats (1961a) 196.

⁶ Cf. Kermode (1967).

⁷ Kermode (1975a).

sense of its relative value as cultural artefact is entailed in their awareness of its *Entfremdung*, its estrangement, alienation. It is tempting to put this in historical terms, as Thomas Greene has in his compelling discussion of Renaissance imitation of the classics; Greene describes a sense of 'historical solitude', the situation in which, with an awareness of one's distance in time and difference in circumstance, the cultural past *becomes* the past.⁸ As poignant and as true as that observation is, with consequences that ramify widely through the Renaissance and beyond, the process of discovering historical solitude sweeps everything, the classic and the non-classic, into that categorical past. The classic's estrangement from the current setting of its reception is surely in part historical, but resides too in the kind of attention it seems to command from its audience. A Shakespeare audience hopes for a good performance; a play that will entertain and possibly move them. They know, too, that they will have to cope with that old, quaint dialect of English and a historical distance that will put many references out of their reach; performers struggle to bridge the gap. But there is something else. 'We that are young | shall never see so much, nor live so long': ask a member of the audience to parse that plain English in the context of what they've just seen in *King Lear*, and you are likely to get something unsatisfactory but at the same time an acknowledgement that the phrase matters, is neither trivial nor unrelated to the set of expectations that brought him or her to the theatre. In one crucial sense, a modern audience cannot know *Lear*, knows it cannot, and that knowledge is central to its experience of this classic. The (ironically) perfectly intelligible lines from *The Tempest* (IV. i. 146–58) seem to make a closely related point, as Shakespeare breaks the dramatic illusion and appears to address Ferdinand and his (present and later, classicizing) auditors, all at once:

PROSPERO You do look, my son, in a moved sort,
 As if you were dismay'd; be cheerful, sir.
 Our revels now are ended. These our actors
 (As I foretold you) were all spirits, and
 Are melted into air, into thin air,
 And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 The cloud-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And like this insubstantial pageant faded
 Leave not a rack behind. . . .

⁸ Greene (1982).

This shadowy imagining that is Shakespeare's classic corpus is not just, like the rest of us, a mortal thing, but always, necessarily, an illusion, an image, a transient fabric of local circumstance and world-view—and of mind. Harking back to Prospero's words, classicizing readers and playgoers knowingly, for the most part, transpose themselves not into a timeless place, nor even to a reconstructed 'Shakespeare's day', but to a 'different' immaterial mindscape whose artful construction compels us, precisely, in its non-being. We savour Shakespeare *because* those words of his, in just those expressions of thought and feeling and dramatic placement, are impossible now, were impossible ever after the moment they were written.

I'd like to consider in this chapter some implications of that observation—at least in respect of the literary translation that will be my subject. I want to think about not so much how a classic might, through translation, find (transitory) 'permanence' or new life, but how, and to some extent why, certain translators confront fundamental issues of literary reception when rendering what we'll call, without properly defining them, 'classic' texts. These issues pivot on the tension *between* closure and instauration; not, as we've noted, through a re-encoding of assumed cultural constants, a kind of cultural pickling, but, precisely, as an inherently creative act paradoxically reaching out to, attempting to incorporate, something no longer there. The instance of this not entirely simple phenomenon I want to consider is Christopher Marlowe's *Lucan*, first by discussing some of the ways Marlowe's decision to translate *Lucan* seems a natural and timely one, a good fit for early Elizabethan England, and thus potentially an example of this classic's durability through time. But then I'd like to conclude by looking at how the translation addresses, almost by contrast, the issues attending the original's classic status outlined above—its recalcitrance, its refusal to come wholly across, its essential estrangement.

Marlowe's partial version, his *Lucan's First Book*, was published in 1600, but was (since Marlowe was killed in 1593) obviously composed earlier. Precisely when is not certain: some have thought it, like Marlowe's complete version of Ovid's elegies, a product of his university years; others seeing more finish in the *Lucan* than the *Ovid*, place it later.⁹ There is some external evidence for the latter case: it is entered, paired with the late *Hero and Leander*, in the Stationer's Register of 1593, the year of Marlowe's death.¹⁰ It is the first completed version of the first book in English—Googe and Turberville had begun and aborted versions

⁹ Gill (1973) 401–13 counts it among *Lucan's juvenilia*, along with the *Elegies* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.

¹⁰ Both Shapiro in Friedenreich, Gill, and Kuriyama (1988) 326 and Cheney in Cheney (2004b) place the work late.

earlier—and translates a text uncannily suited to Marlowe's day. Lucan's problematic, revisionary (and unfinished) epic, *De Bello Civili* (or *Bellum Civile*), sometimes referred to as the *Pharsalia* after the decisive battle it features, constitutes ten books of scarifying indictment of the civil war between the ambitious Caesar and the Republican senatorial faction led by Pompeius Magnus and Cato Uticensis. Lucan, writing more than a century later than the events under the patronage and shadow of Caesar's megalomaniac and murderous descendant Nero, does the thing up in unconventional, anti-Virgilian style: the gods play no role, though witches, divines, and visitants from the underworld make due appearances; language and imagery, 'rhetorical' and hyperbolic, are flagrantly unclassical; the poem espouses no particular epic hero—or rather three (or four) anti-heroes;¹¹ it is by turns campy, cartoonish, grotesque, disillusioned, passionate, ambivalent, excessive, and incisive. It is deeply serious, pessimistic, despairing, but notoriously offers few clear signals to what positive values it might espouse. Lucan's poem is a vision of the collapse of things: of order, polity, art, language, philosophy, spirit. It depicts and embodies civil war, raised to the level of metaphor glossing the human condition: 'the poem surges out way past its represented civil war, the events of 49–8, to offer, not "the civil war," but "civil wars," i.e. "the (Roman) civil wars" and "Civil War."¹² That is, humankind at war with itself in a moment that seems much like the final (dis)solution.

That sense of crisis, of humanity mindlessly inflicting war upon itself, would not have been strange to Marlowe and his contemporaries. From 1562 to 1598, neighbouring France was riven by religious wars between Catholics and Huguenots. Emblematic was the St Bartholomew's Day's Massacre in Paris in 1572, when, after the (royally) plotted assassination of the Huguenot leader Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, Catholic mobs indiscriminately slaughtered thousands of Huguenots in Paris streets. The massacre was imitated at Lyons, Toulouse, and Bordeaux, and estimates of the dead range up to one hundred thousand. A fair number of Huguenot refugees settled in Marlowe's Canterbury; the young Marlowe would have known them. As David Riggs puts it,

The French noun *massacre* originally referred to a slaughterhouse or butcher's shambles. The word took on its modern meaning of mass murder in the wake of the notorious pogrom at Lyons. After the official executioner there, and then the soldiers, refused to kill Protestant citizens being held in the city jail, Catholic authorities turned the job over to the butchers. . . . The eight year old Christopher Marlowe, living on the

¹¹ See Johnson (1987).

¹² Henderson (1998a) 169; Henderson's article, along with Johnson (1987), Masters (1992), and Bartsch (1997) are key recent readings of the poem. See also the shorter discussions in Martindale (1993) 48–52, 64–74.

edge of the town shambles, could readily grasp the sense of this metaphor. . . . [I]t stayed with him. In three of his early plays for the public stage, *1 and 2 Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta*, he incorporates a massacre into the final act. . . . When the adult Marlowe imagines closure, he thinks of dismemberment, drowning and mass destruction. *The Massacre at Paris*, the last of Marlowe's plays to be performed before his death, warned English audiences that militant French Catholics, the Pope and the King of Spain remained committed to a policy of brute extermination.¹³

Part and parcel of this murderous climate were the plots and counterplots of Catholic and Protestant forces in England; in these Marlowe was directly involved as a paid agent of Elizabeth's government. Apropos of that, Roma Gill (1998), modestly revising her earlier view of Marlowe's translation as juvenilia, locates it 'in the period of national tension surrounding the disclosure of the Babington Conspiracy to dethrone the monarch, with the execution of Mary Queen of Scots (1587), and the threat of the invasion of the Spanish Armada (1588)'.¹⁴ Marlowe's reliability and faith to the cause were, however, matters of some doubt and concern to his handlers, and in the end this uncertainty, along with Marlowe's outspoken, blasphemous atheism and perhaps criminal activities and associations, led to the Queen's decision to 'prosecute [him] to the full': he was dead within days.¹⁵

This climate of suspicion, betrayal, and fresh memory of the slaughter of innocents is hard to 'place' in a classic text like the *Aeneid*, though the memory of civil war lurks in the background of that great poem too. Lucan is another matter, and this may have had something to do with what James Shapiro calls 'a remarkable renaissance in literature based upon the *Pharsalia*: Daniel published his *Civil Wars* modeled upon Lucan in 1595; a year later Drayton publish his *Mortimeriados*, also based upon the *Pharsalia*; Shakespeare's Brutus would speak of the spirit of Julius Caesar which "walks abroad, and turns our swords | In our own proper entrails" (Julius Caesar V.iii.93–95).¹⁶ The speech of Caesar's centurion, the murderously devoted Laelius, for instance, is couched in rhetoric, and espousing a situation, even a frame of mind, not unfamiliar to an Elizabethan audience (373–80):

Love over-rules my will, I must obey thee,
 Caesar; he whom I hear thy trumpets charge
 I hold no Roman; by these ten blest ensigns
 And all they several triumphs, shouldst thou bid me
 Entomb my sword within my brother's bowels;
 Or father's throat; or women's groaning womb;
 This hand (albeit unwilling) should perform it;

¹³ Riggs (2004a) 32–4.

¹⁴ Friedenreich, Gill, and Kuriyama (1988) 331.

¹⁵ Riggs (2004b) 38.

¹⁶ Shapiro (1988) 317.

Nor would Caesar's view of his victory at Pharsalia strike a false note, in a passage Lucan does not translate (7. 789–96):

He beholds the rivers rushing with blood and the corpses heaped high as lofty hills and the piles of the dead, now settling down into a rotten mess, and he counts up the nations that followed Pompey's standard. A special place is prepared for his victory banquet from which he can view the faces of the fallen. It thrills his heart that he cannot make out the topography of Emathia for the corpses that cover it, it thrills him to gaze on fields obscured by gore. There he discerns the truth of his luck and of his gods, written in blood.¹⁷

Lucan's own voice, a few lines earlier, offers commentary (7. 551–4): 'Here is the rage and the insanity, and here, Caesar, are your crimes! Leave in the darkness of shadows, and let no coming age learn from my poetry, what abominations civil war invites.'¹⁸ Abominations he writes out in pitying detail that might have recalled to Marlowe the indiscriminate massacres of his own day (2. 103–13):

Blood pools in the temples; reddened rocks
are soaked in slaughter. Age is no help:
no shame in hurrying on an old man's declining day
nor in cutting off a helpless babe on the brink of life.
For what crime could these young deserve death?
Now, it is enough just to be able to die. Bloodlust carries them away:
a man shows himself a slacker if he inquires about guilt.
Many die to stack the numbers; a bloody winner
snatches a head severed from unknown neck, ashamed
to walk empty-handed. . . .

The *BC* is stuffed with images of violence, some passages so overwrought and grotesque as to offer easy targets to criticism of Lucan's 'rhetorical' epic style. Literary history has not spared Lucan for his rhetoric that carries violence and bloodletting into the comic-bizarre, as when during the sea-battle at Massilia a fighter loses first one hand, then another, but, undaunted, hurls the weight of his body against his enemies. Or when an anonymous victim happens into an unusual way of dying (3. 652–8):

Then was seen a unique form
of awful death when, from opposite sides ships came together
and caught between them, with their prows, a young man in the water.
His chest was split down the middle by the ferocious impacts,
nor could his arms keep the bronze beaks from crashing,
his bones ground down: up from his smashed belly, blood
and guts poured from his mouth.¹⁹

¹⁷ W. R. Johnson's translation (1987) 102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ This and the previous are my free translations.

In this literary proclivity he is not far from Ovid, who consistently undermines potential pathos in his *Metamorphoses* with an almost baroque verbal grotesquery. For his part, Lucan surely shares some of Ovid's fascination with language's power to express, nuance, calibrate, even compromise primary emotions like pity and fear. Where is the turning point, in the portrayal of violence, between horror and disgust or between the later and black near-comedy? The question would in fact have occurred to early Elizabethans such as Marlowe and Shakespeare, and the problems attending the modern staging and reception of a play such as *Titus Andronicus* (c.1590 or earlier), a specimen of Elizabethan revenge tragedy built on Ovid and Seneca. But Lucan's epic is both more successful as a work of art than *that* Shakespearean play and less mannerist than passages of Ovid's poem. His images of violence, strange and bizarre as they often turn out, are part of a huge overreaching that both illustrates and thematizes transgression; everything about the *BC* is *abnormal*, and that is the point.

Not a style for all occasions; a fact reflected in the paucity of good English translations. Googe, for instance, in the prologue to his aborted version of the poem makes his muse sound something like a patriotic drill sergeant:

Stand up young man, quoth she, dispatch, and take thy pen in hand,
Write thou the civil wars and broil in ancient Latin lands.
Reduce to English sense, she said, the lofty Lucan's verse;
The cruel chance and doleful end of Caesar's state rehearse.

And Nicholas Rowe, in a complete version (1718) much praised by Johnson, opens this way:

Emathian plains with slaughter covered o'er,
and rage unknown to civil wars before,
established violence and lawless might,
avowed and hallowed by the name of right,
a race renown'd, the world's victorious lords,
turn'd on themselves with their own hostile words,
piles against piles opposed in impious fight,
and eagles against eagles bending flight,
of blood by friends, by kindred, parents, spilt,
one common horror and promiscuous guilt,
a shattered world in wild disorder tossed,
leagues, laws, and empire, in confusion lost,
Of all the woes which civil discord bring,
And *Rome* o'ercome by *Roman* arms, I sing.²⁰

²⁰ A recent treatment of Rowe's Lucan, with some points of comparison with Marlowe, can be found in Sowerby (2006) 174–209. See too Brown and Martindale (1988).

Marlowe, rendering Lucan's opening lines, strikes a different, less denaturing, note:

Wars worse than civil on Thessalian plains,
 And outrage strangling law, and people strong
 We sing, whose conquering swords their own breasts launched,
 Armies allied, the kingdom's league uprooted.
 Th'affrighted world's force bent on public spoil,
 Trumpets and drums, like deadly threat'ning other,
 Eagles alike displayed, darts answering darts.
 Romans what madness, what huge lust of war,
 Hath made *barbarians* drunk with *Latin* blood?

(*Bella per Emathios plus quam civilia campos
 iusque datum sceleri canimus, populumque potentem
 in sua victrici conversum viscera dextra,
 cognatasque acies, et rupto foedere regni
 certatum totis concussi viribus orbis
 in commune nefas, infestisque obvia signis
 signa, pares aquilas et pila minantia pilis.
 quis furor, o cives, quae tanta licentia ferri?
 gentibus invisus Latium praebere cruorem. . . .*)

Rowe's heroic couplets obviously expand on the Latin, offering the opportunity to adapt overtly Lucan's phrasing and structures of thought. There are gains and losses in that, and Robin Sowerby has recently discussed both.²¹ Marlowe's translation, on the other hand, frequently described as metaphrastic in Dryden's sense of the word, is bound much more closely to the cadences and manner of Lucan's original. Marlowe's decision to compose in blank verse while keeping a line-for-line sense correspondence, enforces a verbal economy that contrasts strikingly with Rowe. The manner of translation seems to allow the stark intensity of Lucan's poetry to come through, as a number of people have noticed. But even a cursory look at the opening lines shows that Marlowe's version is anything but word-for-word. Most lines rephrase, borrowing lexical sense when possible but making frequent adaptations to grammar and other substitutions. 'And outrage strangling law', for instance, is but a broad paraphrase of *iusque datum sceleri*. Where lexical mapping, English for Latin, does occur, the effect can be weak and distorting, as in 'and people strong | we sing' or 'armies allied' for *cognatasque acies*. On the other hand, the translational response is assured, if not literal, in those places where Marlowe resorts to paraphrase:

²¹ Sowerby (2006); see previous note. He discusses Rowe's opening lines on pp. 176–9.

the kingdom's league uprooted.
Th'affrighted world's force bent on public spoil,
Trumpets and drums, like deadly threat'ning other.

'[K]ingdom's league uprooted' misses the negative valence in *regni*, a word that would have suggested an odious autocracy or tyranny to a republican sympathizer such as Lucan; but it does nicely reflect Elizabeth's precarious monarchy. 'Trumpets and drums' is nowhere in the Latin, but is a not inapt contemporizing touch. 'Th'affrighted world's force bent on public spoil' actually improves—to an English ear—the more prosaic and awkward Latin. Finally, the 'closing' two lines

Romans what madness, what huge lust of war,
Hath made *barbarians* drunk with *Latin* blood?

finish with a conclusive impact simply missing in the Latin ('What is this madness, o citizens, what wantonness of the sword? To offer to hostile peoples Roman blood...').

In fact, the characteristic that separates Marlowe most conspicuously from such translators as Rowe and many since is the degree to which the voice, tenor, rhythm, and touch are notably his own, identifiably Marlovian. A good deal of that individuality can be traced to the dramatist's choice of blank verse, with the qualification that, as Shapiro has pointed out, this is *Marlowe's* blank verse:

There is no question from the point of view of metrical practice, that this work shares the major features of Marlowe's inimitable mighty line. In its broadest contours, Marlowe's verse observes his usual—and idiosyncratic—rules governing the relation of stress and syntax to an underlying metrical pattern. The matching of syllables to metrical positions is likewise typical, as is his treatment of compounds, phrases consisting of monosyllabic adjectives and nouns, and particles.²²

That metrical individuality and the fierce intensity of his language can make powerful poetry, as in this metaphorical description of Caesar (149–58):

Urging his fortune, trusting in the gods,
Destroying what withstood his proud desires,
And glad when blood and ruin made him way:
So thunder which the wind tears from the clouds,
With crack of riven air and hideous sound
Filling the world, leaps out and throws forth fire,
Affrights poor fearful men, and blasts their eyes
With overthwarting flames, and raging shoots

²² Shapiro (1988) 318.

Alongst the air, and, nought resisting it,
Falls, and returns, and shivers where it lights.

Judicious alliteration, bold metrical substitution ('filling the world, leaps out and throws forth fire' sounding rather like Hopkins), and right and economical word choice make for a massive sublimity that is instanced repeatedly in this first and finest ever Englishing of Lucan. But to repeat, the irony is that the very accomplishment of the translation is a function of the conspicuous *Marlovian* voice. Metaphrastic, in some sense, the version's method may be; this is anything but a neutral transmission of Lucan's first book.

Marlowe, thus, effects an appropriation of Lucan's text in the most literal sense of 'making it one's own'. Which bears, again, on the larger question of this (or any) translator's address to 'his' classic. A classic resides conceptually in the public domain (however delimited by education, cultural background, interest groups, and so on); that is because its status as classic is a consequence of reception over time. One may have personal favourites, but not personal classics. Yet the translator, addressing such a text in all its historical and cultural foreignness—for it is precisely this that s/he must manage across the dead gap of its distance from contemporary readers—must take it over, assimilate it, again in the literal sense. Almost paradoxically, then, there will be this sense of appropriation, as in Marlowe's case here *of* the text's original character (broadly interpreted) and *from* the public domain. The rendering in the moment of address at the still point between classic and its translation is a private act of assimilation and processing of this familiar-and-alien text into one's own idiom, even as the new text is nuanced and polished into locutions that will work in a new public context.

Marlowe's *Lucan*, then, is taken from the dusty bookshelf of leatherbound classics and filtered through the mind and language of a particularly ingenious wordsmith resulting into something at once singular and characteristic of its day. But to what further end? Others were attempting *Lucan*, either in adaptation or translation as well; religious controversy and unstable political circumstances of Elizabethan England made the *BC* a natural recourse for the intelligentsia, a cautionary epic fraught with urgency and vivid awareness of crisis. Marlowe would have been attracted to the project of translating *Lucan* for similar reasons, but Patrick Cheney sees more in the decision, finding evidence of a latent *Marlovian* republicanism 'in opposition to monarchical power'.²³ Beyond the notion that '*Lucan* is "the central poet of the republican imagination"', Cheney argues that the sequence of Marlowe's translations and adaptations, Ovid's elegies, the counter-epic love story extracted from the

²³ Cheney (2004a) 15.

Aeneid, *The Tragedy of Dido*, Lucan, and *Hero and Leander*, describe an Ovidian rather than Virgilian generic progress, and so an anti-imperial, anti-authoritarian disposition.²⁴ Whether this actually reflects Marlowe's political sympathies or not, the texts can legitimately be read this way. Marlowe might have given us the best English *Aeneid* instead of this best Lucan, but for the fact that the latter answered the needs of his time and disposition.

All Latin epic after Virgil is described as, precisely, 'after' Virgil, post-Virgilian. While some of it is imitative, derivative, Lucan made a conscious break. Virgil's divine machinery becomes nothing but the dark powers of the underworld; Jupiter's imperial promise, the divinely spoken *fatum* driving, ordering, redeeming the human toll Virgil describes with such tragic sublimity becomes in Lucan the grisly, necromantic doings of the horrific witch Erichtho. The energy driving Lucan's poem is the overweening ambition of Caesar and humanity's own proclivity for self-destruction. Marlowe is fascinated by both, as his great dramatic works, *Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II* amply demonstrate. Those plays also reveal the strains of Marlowe's atheism and his willingness to provoke his audiences. The atheism, accompanied by tales of his blasphemous witticisms (e.g. that Jesus and John the Baptist were lovers), his own (probable) homosexuality, his doubtful allegiance to the crown, and dealings with the criminal underworld in the end made him too much of a liability to the court—and it dealt with him summarily. But these features of this complex playwright, whom Drayton famously praised as having 'in him those brave translunary things that the first poets had,' made the choice to translate Lucan perfectly natural and obvious. Both crafted literary careers in ferocious reaction to their traditions, both were young poets, almost too brilliant, both were cultivated by their respective courts, but in the end were too much to handle; both were intractable, and both were to be killed for it. Of course there were vast differences too, most of these obvious (Lucan an aristocrat, Marlowe an educated son of a tanner), but they have similar literary instincts—rhetorical, experimental, iconoclastic—and were involved directly with the subversive politics of their day. Most likely, Marlowe saw Lucan's role in the Pisonian conspiracy with some sympathy—perhaps not out of republican conviction as much as admiration for this Roman poet having dared something. Lucan had dared; bet his life and lost it. But he'd also dared to write the most profoundly iconoclastic classic in Roman literature, a work was itself a translation, of Virgil, of empire, of Caesarism, of the myth of Rome. Translation

²⁴ Cheney (2004a) Cheney cites Norbrook (1999) on the centrality of Lucan to the Republican imagination.

and deformation, or translation as deformation, it might be obvious to say. And this most centrally in respect to Virgilian values, or Virgil as representative classic of a certain kind of Romanness.

Beyond Marlowe's reluctance to rephrase the Virgilian story of Roman *imperium sine fine*, there is an intriguing elusiveness in Lucan that might have compelled Marlowe as well. Whom of his 'heroes' does he admire, and in what terms? Caesar, evil genius and irresistible force, Pompey, tired, old stalwart of the Republic, or Cato, intolerant, priggish, unpitiful paragon of Stoic integrity? Where *exactly* does *he* stand when he writes, weighing the respective causes (in Marlowe's near-perfect rendering), 'Each side had great partakers; Caesar's cause | the gods abetted; Cato liked the other'? It is complicated. If definitive answers are not to be had, there is fun and challenge in sorting through—as Marlowe did—Lucan's suggestive, perhaps finally inconclusive insubordinations. Take the apparently sycophantic praise of Nero near the opening of Book 1 (going on for some 33 lines), 'but if for Nero (then unborn) the fates | would find no other means, . . . we plain not heavens, but gladly bear these evils | for Nero's sake. . . .' Some explain the flattery away: it was expected, the language of emperor cults, and so forth. The passage does have a contemporary parallel, the encomium of Nero stuck into the satirical screed of Lucan's uncle, Seneca, the *Apocolocyntosis*, or *Pumpkinification of the Emperor Claudius*. Here Apollo is made to wish the emperor a long life and to praise Nero in terms that would befit no one so much as Apollo himself (20–32).

'Cut nothing short, Parcae,' said Apollo,
 'let this one, like to me in looks and grace,
 and not worse in song and voice,
 surpass the limits of mortal life. He will bring
 joy to the weary, and will break the laws' silence.
 Scattering the flying orbs like the Morning Star,
 and like the Evening Star he rises upon their return,
 or like the reddening Sun when it brings in the day,
 shining he looks upon the world and whips up his chariot,
 such a Caesar is here; Rome shall now look upon such a Nero.
 His shining blazes with modest brightness, his neck
 splendid with flowing hair.'

Nero himself read this, as the satire performs a *damnatio* of Claudius welcome to him, but his megalomania must have rendered him obtuse to the double edge of this language, and the irony entailed in the fact that the new emperor is sanctified as an immortal (Apollo) at the beginning of a poem satirizing the sanctification of his predecessor. The praise breaks off suddenly: 'thus

Apollo. And Lachesis, because she favored the shapely man, was lavish; and gave to Nero many years of life from her own store.' Lucan has 'nice' things to say about Nero too (45–56):

thee (seeing thou being old
Must shine a star) shall heaven (whom thou lovest,
Receive with shouts; where thou wilt reign as King,
Or mount the sun's flame-bearing chariot,
And with bright restless fire compass the earth,
Undaunted though her former guide be changed.
Nature, and every power shall give thee place,
What God it please thee be, or where to sway:
But neither choose the north t' erect thy seat;
Nor yet the adverse recking southern pole,
Whence thou shouldst view thy Rome with squinting beams.
If any one part of vast heaven thou swayest,
The burdened axes with thy force will bend; . . .

Marlowe here is close to the sense of the Latin, though of course his Christian readership would find a little more reason than Romans to be startled at the notion of Nero as king of heaven. Once again there is overt comparison with Apollo; the flattery is if possible yet more excessive than in Seneca, which might be reason enough to distinguish this literary sycophancy from the more serious and conventional classical instances of the phenomenon (there were several). Lucan's dithering here about just where to *put* Nero, once catasterized, is another signal: not too far north or south, but just in the middle. That middle, however, might be a problem, for 'the burdened axes with thy force will bend': Nero's weight problem done up in stellar language. The emperor *might* not have noticed, but many of Lucan's readers would. Further, the juxtapositions of this flattery are poisonous (38–45):

For Nero's sake: Pharsalia groan with slaughter;
And Carthage souls be gluttred with our bloods;
At Munda let the dreadful battles join;
Add, Caesar, to these ills Perusian famine;
The Mutin toils; the fleet at Leuca sunk;
And cruel field near burning Aetna fought:
Yet Rome is much bound to these civil arms,
Which made thee Emperor.

Nero is made not just the outcome of Rome's civil strife, but its *raison d'être*; Lucan's emperor as Aristotelian final cause of all that evil. Lucan himself is if anything more explicit than Marlowe: *quod tibi res acta est*— 'for you the thing was done'. Lucan (with Marlowe) does go on to speak of

peace under Nero ('bolt the brazen gates with bars of iron') then runs right over the top again: *sed mihi iam numen* ('you're already a god to me')—rendered by Marlowe more extravagantly, 'Thou Caesar at this instant are my God' (63).

The point of dwelling on this passage just a bit is not to attempt to draw out Lucan's subversiveness or paint an unambiguous picture of Lucan's Republican sympathies. For it is in the nature of Lucan's epic that you can't always tell for sure. As suggestive and apparently satirically overdone the rhetoric (of praise, here) is, the poet doesn't come out and say what he thinks in quite the way Virgil does. Or better, perhaps, he says different things at different times; now loathing Nero's ancestor Caesar, now openly wondering at his transcending, transgressive ambition. So too, in different terms, with Pompey and Cato. Lucan's text is a place where disintegration, irresolution get full play, not coherence or programme or even (consistent) ideology. It is an unsettled place of experiment, provocation. Which brings us back around to further speculation about the relation of this classic to its Marlovian translation, specifically to the hitches and rubs attending the transposition of this ancient classic to Marlowe's time. The unsettled literary experiment that is Lucan's *BC* may well have seemed to the unsettled Marlowe fertile ground for the cultural transpositions built into the fabric of his translation. But again the challenging rhetoric and play with thematic bearings that makes Lucan's poem so singular, *work* only within the frame of its historical and political context. The scholar and reader may, of course, imagine and study themselves into the position of becoming relatively informed witnesses to what Lucan is up to in the epic. Translation, however, re-envisioning the Latin, places it in 'contemporary' England by means of some, specific rhetorical strategy—which can be as obtuse as letting us hear through Lucan's plot drum-beating monitions intended to suggest the dangers of Catholic ambitions against the crown. Or something more subtle and ambiguous, as Marlowe has it. The point being that the original has to be reimagined; the Lucanian provocation requiring Marlovian response. Neatly, as we've seen, that response is utterly individual yet constitutes analogous points of address in respect of Elizabethan society and politics. As instanced in the understandable but still provocative fact that Marlowe stops cold at the end of the first book. Understandable because the *BC* is long and Marlowe presumably had other literary projects on his mind. But many of the passages most graphically illustrating the horrors of civil war and tyranny's overweening ambition occur, as we have seen, after Book 1. If he had wished to make a more direct comment on the current political situation, he might have done up Books 2, 3, or 7, where the execution of ambition and pursuit of power have their calamitous playing out. Not doing so he missed expressive opportunities almost ideally suited to his muse. There is no telling

why Marlowe chose to translate (only) what he did, but the simple fact of breaking off, a huge aposiopesis, is in itself expressive: what follows this masterful translation of Lucan's introductory book is, literally, silence.

Significantly, that silence comes after the sequence of dire prophecies that close the book: Aruns' haruspication, with its lovely grotesquery ('the liver swell'd with filth, and every vein | did threaten horror from the host of Caesar: | a small thin skin contained the vital parts, | the heart stirred not, and from the gaping liver | squeezed matter...'), Figulus' horoscopy, and finally an Apollo-frenzied matron running madly through the streets proclaiming disaster (680–94):

Phoebus, what rage is this?
 Why grapples Rome, and makes war, having no foes?
 Whither turn I now? now lead'st me toward th' east,
 Where Nile augmenteth the Pelusian sea:
 This headless trunk that lies on Nilus' sand
 I know: now throughout the air I fly,
 To doubtful Syrtes and dry Africke, where
 A fury leads the Emathian bands, from thence
 To the pine bearing hills, hence to the mounts
 Pirene, and so back to Rome again.
 See, impious war defiles the Senate house,
 New factions rise: now through the world again
 I go; o Phoebus show me Neptune's shore,
 And other Regions, I have seen Philippi:
 This said, being tired with fury she sunk down.

That (Englished) message can have been intended to reflect on both Lucan's Rome and Marlowe's England, a despairing formulation of the past as future. The play with time is made more complicated by these 'prophecies' being originally composed (a century) after the historical events. The temporal framing, inversion, and juggling suggests a process that enacts translation as memory, literally recall, a recall that is already pre-scribed by the prophetic text being translated. But the funny thing about prophecies is that sometimes they come true and sometimes they don't. Lucan's text dictates, or might seem to want to, its own reincarnation in English. Marlowe, however, highlighting the problematic, prophetic word in his *closing* words, has recalled what he wants to, in the way he wants to express it, for as we've seen this is very much a Marlovian construction of words—and so set hard limits on what this ancient text will say. The degree to which the narrative outcomes (Books 2 and following) of the dire prophecies of Aruns et al. would map onto the parlous days of Elizabeth's early reign simply remained, then, to be seen. This prematurely truncated classic, again radically truncated in

translation, in fact, might *not* be a good fit. The impending silence after Book 1 simply leaves the question open; the narrative outcome of this translation is, precisely, unscripted.

This tension between the written and the unwritten, the foresaid and the unknown, draws attention to what I've been referring to as the essential estrangement of the classic text. The spoken and written word, as Shakespeare has it, dies its natural death, 'melt(s) into thin air' and 'leave(s) not a rack behind'. Bits of ink on processed wood fibre keep a ghostly record of their inceptive wholeness. They become real and to some extent whole again (or differently whole) only when called up, from across a temporal and conceptual void, into some new performance or literary setting where their fit is both (eminently, helpfully) right and (disturbingly, disorientingly, informingly) wrong. The dissonances instruct and delight as much as do its new-rendered harmonies. With a classic it must always be thus.

Lucan himself enfigures the idea in his image of the dead called back to inform the present: 'souls quiet and appeased sighed from their graves' (566). Jamie Masters has observed that 'in the *Bellum Civile* epic is resurrected and lives again in a weird, grotesque afterlife, before it is allowed to die for good'.²⁵ Translation, especially of the classic, does that too (not always with the weird grotesquery). It is a little like the witch Erichtho rummaging around among the dead (Book 6), Marlowe rummages around in a language, a construction of meaning, that is no longer part of living, breathing life. The image is a little less redemptive, a little less optimistic than most discussion of translation likes to allow. Messing with corpses. But, then, that is what civil and religious wars give us, and when the two circumstances merge, the force of this translation becomes overdetermined. To elect to translate (epic, a classic) is to present and enact a commerce with death. Choosing to render Lucan in English, Marlowe recalled what his potential readership needed to hear: the voice of the dead speaking of death's ugly truth. The lovely irony is that Marlowe's consummate rendering has ensured that this particular Lucanian ghost continues, given a little recalling of our own, to speak to us: focusing, distilling, enunciating our disquiet.

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²⁵ Masters (1992) 138 quoted in Hardie (1993) 107.

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‘An Agreeable Innovation’: Play and Translation

J. Michael Walton

In Michael Wodhull’s 1782 translation of Euripides’ *The Suppliants* he includes a stage direction which must, by any benchmark, be rated a significant miscalculation.¹ The play, though seldom translated and hardly ever performed, includes one of the most intractable of staging problems in surviving classical drama. Evadne, crazed as Tosca, apparently makes an appearance on a high rock (*aitherian petran*, 987) threatening to jump into the already burning funeral pyre of her husband Capaneus, one of the seven killed in the unsuccessful siege of Thebes. Not only does she threaten to jump, but, eighty lines later, does so, to the dismay of her watching father and of the Chorus of mothers of the slain, one of whom ought to be her mother-in-law.

The first translation into English of *Suppliants* (which has the same title but nothing else in common with the Aeschylus play) was in 1781 by Robert Potter, a seasoned translator by this time, having produced the first full English Aeschylus four years before. Potter’s Euripides appeared in two volumes initially, two years apart, lacking only *Cyclops* from the surviving canon of nineteen plays. The ribaldry, never mind implied buggery, of *Cyclops* proved a problem for a number of early translators, though not for Michael Wodhull. Wodhull, another product of that remarkable forcing-ground of classical scholarship, Winchester College, had been working in a desultory fashion translating Euripides for a number of years without much end in sight. When Potter went into print with his first nine Euripidean tragedies, it galvanized Wodhull into action and his entire nineteen were published in 1782, together with a crabby introduction and some snide remarks about Potter’s ordering of plays, which reveal Wodhull’s gall at Potter’s getting in first, at least in part.

¹ For publication details of translations mentioned peripherally, see the Appendix to Walton (2006).

Potter completed his run of eighteen the following year and a depth comparison between the two translators would make an intriguing study in its own right. For the present purposes this one example stands out. Evadne perched on her cliff has a final short speech, the end of which Potter translates as:

It matters not; thou canst not reach me here.
 Now plunge I headlong down; to thee my fall
 Not pleasing, but to me, and to my husband,
 Thus join'd in death and in one funeral pile. (1069–71)

Neither Potter nor Wodhull had any expectations that their translations would appear anywhere other than in print, but Wodhull chose to add a stage direction:

EVADNE, *as she is throwing herself from the Rock,*
 It is all the same;
 Nor can you now by stretching forth your hand
 Stop my career. Already have I taken
 The fatal leap, and hence descend, with joy,
 Though not indeed to you, yet to myself,
 And to my lord, with whose remains I blaze.

Potter's mastery of the five-foot iambic line (the Greek dialogue line is in trimeters with six feet, but most verse translators opt for the blank verse iambic pentameter) may not be memorable, but has a simple dignity and a plausibility. Wodhull extends the number of lines in English from three to six and, through his stage direction, apparently invites his readers to envisage them as delivered by Evadne in mid-air. The staging of the scene is problematic enough without this intervention. It is a moot point whether it is any part of the translator's job to offer stage directions that have only marginal justification from the text.² Potter offers nothing more than the identification of those present in any scene, but most subsequent translators of plays from the classical repertoire up to the most modern, do give a version of the stage action from their own imagination.

Not to labour the specific point too much, it does highlight a need, in translating a play from any period, to make allowance for what is stageable, if only because that is how and why the plays were written. The potential for stage action may well be deeply embedded within the spoken text. My purpose here is to look at the early history of the translation of classical drama, Greek and Latin, identifying some specific examples, mainly from the

² Walton (2006) 51–3, 69–79.

Greeks, that demonstrate why translating a play is such a different exercise from translating any other area of the classics.

Sirkku Aaltonen pointed to the special requirements of stage translation when she wrote, ‘The interest in what follows is directed functionally towards translated texts which have been intended for use, or actually been used, in stage productions. This specification is important as theatre translation is not necessarily synonymous with drama translation.’³ This difference between ‘theatre’ and ‘drama’ is undeniable. Aaltonen adds here the implied licence, or even requirement, in translating a theatre work to identify the action within the text and, notwithstanding the words on the page, make it into something that underlines performability. ‘Performability’, as Susan Bassnett suggested, is a nebulous critical term, but she also pointed to the distinction, advanced by both Horace and St Jerome, between two types of translation: *word for word* and *sense for sense*.⁴ There is a flexibility beyond the word in translating stage plays and a consequent flexibility in translating a play for specific performance. The simple cause is not only the need for the translator to uncover the ‘theatre language’ and to transfer a source to a target, but the fact that the translation of a play is itself no more than a transition between a source captured in words and what I choose to call the ‘true target’ which resides within the area bounded by stage production and audience reception.

What this amounts to is that we may identify as a classic, a poem, a piece of rhetoric, or a historical description, mutable according to the experience and interpretation of each reader, but with something about it that is fixed and to which one may always return. Plays are different, the written text existing with some intrinsic worth (who could deny the power of Shakespeare as a poet on the page?), but with the performance dimension still to be added, which makes them open-ended.

This is inevitably more of an issue with classical drama than with modern plays, partly because the barrier of time includes much conjecture on, but precious little factual indication about, how the surviving classical repertoire was actually first performed; partly because *any* act of theatrical transference, however ‘faithful’ to the original (whatever that may mean) consists less of recreating that original than of recreating it for an audience that is *not* the original. A play is captured or recorded in print, which is how the texts of Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and the rest have been preserved. But what is written is only a partial guide to what was originally played, and even less of an

³ Aaltonen (2000) 4.

⁴ Bassnett-McGuire (1981) 37. See also ‘Translating Dramatic Texts’ in Bassnett (1991) 120–32.

indication how anything from the classical repertoire might be revisited in subsequent centuries, or translated to alternative tongues and cultures. Even Seneca, never designed, in all probability, for full stage presentation, allows through the nature of dialogue for a player's interpretative delivery. However possible it may be to maintain faith with the dramatic and theatrical essence of a classical tragedy and comedy—their narrative drive, their rhythm, their emotional engagement—the proper job of each new translator, director, and actor is not to try and recreate 'the classical', in the sense of disinterring an ancient performance, but to renew it. The 'classical', when talking of a theatre piece, is not the fact of chorus, mask, or message so much as the refashioning of the total context so that an audience of today may witness a drama of today, distilled through and devolved from an ancient work and its conventions.

Seeing the production of a classical play is not like witnessing an old film. Film as a medium captures and encapsulates the director's original, freezing it in time so as to be the same for any future audience, give or take the baggage that they will individually bring to its reception. A part of theatre, the throwaway art, dies off nightly and recedes, dream-like, further and further into a collective response with every individual performance, with any new casting, or in any new production. Engaging with a classic piece of theatre is not to search for the single definitive production, or even the single definitive performance of that production. There can be none, any more than there can be a definitive version of a myth which has a broad baseline but is flexible in its detail. This is why translators of a dramatic piece prefer, the best of them, to open it out, not close it down. To survive at all over time a play needs plasticity. Its survival mechanism is to be able to change its shape and adapt to what any new generation requires of it. One direct result of this is the ephemeral nature of most stage translations, to which those of Potter and Wodhull bear abundant witness, though theirs less so than in some nineteenth- and twentieth-century examples.

The history of the translation of classical plays goes back to the Romans, if, that is, the first tragedies in Latin, by Livius Andronicus and Ennius, can really be counted as such. Livius, a former slave, was born sometime around 284 BC, a date which more or less coincides with the death of the last great Greek playwright Menander. Little enough survives of Menander's comic output, but nothing of the work of either Livius or Ennius beyond the occasional line and a few titles which hint at the Greek repertoire. Livius wrote an *Aegisthus*, an *Achilles* and an *Andromeda*; Ennius, a contemporary of Plautus and Terence, several titles that might echo or cover those of Euripides, an *Andromache*, a *Hecuba* and a *Medea*. What distinguishes the two Latin tragedians, however, is that both wrote comedies as well as tragedies, something virtually unknown in the Greek world: Ennius *fabulae praetextae* too, plays based on

Roman history. Livius was sufficiently respected in his own lifetime for the College of Playwrights to be founded in Rome in his honour in 207 BC.

Roman drama for the stage is represented now by twenty surviving plays of Plautus with another in fragmentary state, and six of Terence which tend to get associated with those of Plautus as ‘Roman Comedy’, though it would be difficult to mistake the work of one for the other. Plautus was the former actor, author of marketplace farces which were so popular that his name and reputation were pirated both during his life and after his death. Terence, barely 10 and living in Africa at the time when Plautus died, himself died young after completing only six comedies. What does link the two is that their plays were all based on Greek originals, Terence’s *Andria* (*The Girl from Andros*), *Adelphi* (*Brothers*), *Eunuchus* (*The Eunuch*) and *Heauton Timoroumenos* (*The Self-Tormentor*), all from Menander originals. Whether or not these four, or any of the plays of Plautus, count as ‘translations’ is arguable. Certainly there was no intrinsic disgrace attached to the process of adaptation from Greek into Latin. There does seem to have been considerable debate, if Terence’s defensive prologues are anything to go by, about what constituted a guarantee of quality and what was simply plagiarism.⁵ The otherwise abstruse vendettas that lie behind the whole business could be safely ignored were it not for the fact that the plays of Seneca come into a similar category. His nine tragedies, written during the first century AD, include *Agamemnon*, two Hercules (Heracles) plays, *Medea*, *Oedipus*, *Phaedra* (*Hippolytus*), *Phoenician Women* and *Trojan Women*, all with a distant extant Greek equivalent. There was also a *Thyestes*, a subject twice tackled by Sophocles and once by Euripides in lost plays. Comparison between any Greek title of the same name and the Senecan equivalent reveals little indication of the Latin being anything more than a new approach to a topic from Greek myth, though Seneca almost certainly knew his Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Much of Roman culture was second-hand and, a somewhat dilettantish philhellenism apart, absorbing foreign cultural tastes was part of the Roman empire’s strength.

Translation of classical plays into English began inevitably with those in Latin because the language was still a living language of the monasteries and of the Roman Catholic church. Comedies in Latin ‘derived from’ or, at least conscious of, the plays of Terence go back as far as Petrarch in the fourteenth century and a major recovered text of Plautus was revealed in Rome in 1429, with a number of subsequent translations into Italian for court circles. The first (and anonymous) translation of a Terence comedy into English, *Terens in englysh . . . (the translacyon out of latin into englysh of the furst comedy of tyrens [sic] callyd Andria)*, is dated to 1520. An ‘entire works’ was published

⁵ Walton (2006) chs. 1 and 9.

in 1598 in a translation by R. B. [Richard Bernard] of the Isle of Axholm in Lincolnshire.

Apart from a loose adaptation of *Amphitruo* under the title of *The Birthe of Hercules*, the first English translation of Plautus was his *Menaechmi* by W. W. [William Warner] which appeared in print in 1595. It is close to the original, vigorous too, but with a contemporary feel. Menaechmus' idea of a good meal includes 'artichokes and potato roots'. Whether or not Shakespeare had a pre-publication look at the translation before his own *Comedy of Errors* (which may be from as early as 1589) is still open to debate, but it seems difficult to resist feeling that Shakespeare found a title for another play in Menaechmus' claim: 'We that have loves abroad and wives at home are miserably hampered; yet would every man could tame his shrew as well as I do mine' (Plautus, *Menaechmi*, scene 2).⁶

A number of the plays of both Plautus and Terence had already received productions in Latin, an *Aulularia* in the presence of Elizabeth the First (who had herself translated a Euripides into Latin), but further English Plautus had to wait till Laurence Echard's *Amphitruo*, *Epidicus* and *Rudens* (1695). Alexander Fraser Tytler [Lord Woodhouselee], in his *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1790), was grudging in his approval but savage about some aspects of both Echard's Terence and of his Plautus, 'extremely censurable for his intemperate use of idiomatic phrases'.⁷ Tytler's main aversion was to colloquial language, i.e. the seventeenth-century slang of Echard's which by 1790 is simply awkward. Davos' soliloquy in Act One of Terence's *Andria* begins, in Betty Radice's translation (1976):

Well, Davos, if I took in what the old man was saying just now about a wedding, this is no time for slackness and go-slow methods. I must look out *and* look sharp or it'll be the death of me and my young master. (206–9)

The Bohn edition of 1867 by Henry Riley has;

Assuredly, Davus, there's no room for slothfulness or inactivity, so far as I've just now ascertained the old man's mind about the marriage; which, if it is not provided against by cunning, will be bringing either myself or my master, to ruin.

Echard's version, to which Tytler took special exception,⁸ offered:

Why, seriously, Davy, 'tis high time to bestir thy stumps, and to leave off dozing; at least if a body may guess at the old man's meaning by his mumping. If these brains do not help me out at a dead lift, to pot goes Pilgarlick, or his master, for certain.

⁶ The Signet edition of *Comedy of Errors*, first printed in 1965, usefully included the 1595 *Menaechmi* translated by William Warner.

⁷ Tytler (1790) 140.

⁸ *Ibid.* 139–40.

Opinion over which of these three may come closest to the spirit of Terence, or, indeed, that of Menander on two of whose plays Terence based his *Andria*, may vary, but there is no denying the liveliness of Echard, even if we are uncomfortable with Davos turning into Davy and have no idea of the precise meaning of ‘mumping’ or ‘Pilgarlick’. None of the three translations, as it happens, is in verse—Terence’s variations of metre are intricate and virtually impossible to replicate—nor was any of the translations intended for production. The issue of modernizing, particularly of comedy, comes down to personal preference, though the stage translator of comedy is faced with the fact that whatever satisfies an audience of today is likely to date as quickly as the ‘book’ of last year’s pantomime.

The influence of Plautus and Terence was not only on Shakespeare but on all manner of writers from Nicholas Udall (*Ralph Roister Doister* dates from 1555) to Jonson, Marston, Heywood, Steele, Cumberland, and Fielding, but borrowings, even close ones, are no more ‘translations’ than are the *Electras* of Sophocles and Euripides translations of Aeschylus’ *Libation-Bearers*.

Seneca, the only Roman tragedian whose work has survived, was similarly influential both on Renaissance tragedy—‘quotations’ from his *Phaedra*, *Thyestes*, *Trojan Women*, and *Oedipus* have been identified in Kyd, Marlowe, and Shakespeare—and on a mass of plays on classical themes to be found on the British stage from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.⁹ The majority opinion is that Seneca’s tragedies were never intended for full production, certainly as part of the repertoire of the Roman theatres which sprouted in any Roman or provincial town of even peripheral importance from the early years of the empire onwards. Various of his tragedies were translated in the second half of the sixteenth century, the earliest Jasper Heywood’s *Thyestes* from 1560, closely followed by Alexander Nevyle’s [Neville’s] *Oedipus* and John Studley’s *Agamemnon*, *Medea*, and, subsequently, *Hippolytus* [*Phaedra*] and *Hercules Oetaeus*. The various translations, together with others by Thomas Nuce [or Newce], and Thomas Newton, were published as *Seneca, his Tenne Tragedies* in 1581, so all could have been known to even the least educated of Shakespeare’s contemporaries.¹⁰ Subsequent translations of Seneca were seldom intended for performance either, at least up to the text of *Oedipus* ‘adapted by Ted Hughes’ which Peter Brook used for his wild and woolly production at the Old Vic in 1968. They need not detain us here.

⁹ See especially Hall and Macintosh (2005).

¹⁰ ‘Imprinted at London in Fleetstreete Near unto Saint Dunston’s Church by Thomas Marthe, 1581’... Dedicated ‘To Sir Thomas Heneage knight, Treasurer of her Maiestie’s Chamber’. The ‘Tenne’ include *Octavia*, a play on a contemporary Roman theme which is no longer believed to be by Seneca.

There is a curiosity behind all this. By the end of the sixteenth century, all the plays of Terence and of Seneca had been translated into English. It was approaching two hundred years before the whole of Plautus was similarly acknowledged. Admittedly there are more plays of Plautus than of Terence and Seneca combined, but no full translation appeared in print until two volumes by Bonnel Thornton in 1767, revised in 1769, with a further three volumes translated by Richard Warner, in 1772 and 1774. The popularity of all six Terence plays, coupled with the uninspired quality of some of the Plautus fringe, may partially account for this; on a more positive note, so may the fact that the twenty Plautus that do survive have a surprising range of tone and morality, from the downright seedy to the pleasantly sentimental, something that critics tend to find alarming and off-putting. The other major difference between Plautus and Terence is that a Plautus script is a series of invitations to the actor, creative excuses for farce and physical comedy, where character depends on the needs of the moment rather than as part of a pattern of behaviour. This is not to suggest that Plautus is necessarily a worse or a better playwright than Terence. He does offer a very different challenge to the translator and is harder to appreciate on the page.

The latter half of the eighteenth century caught up with Plautus, primarily because this was a new age of translation which was itself inspired by an act of dramatic translation. In 1730 Father Pierre Brumoy published a monumental study of Greek drama in Paris under the title of *Le Théâtre des Grecs* (*Théâtre de Grecs* in Lennox). It is in three volumes. The first begins with a tribute to Greek plays and 'leurs traducteurs', following with essays on the origins, background, and modern parallels of Greek tragedy and comedy. In the rest of this volume, and in the other two, there is a digest of all the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, as well as of the comedies of Aristophanes; the entire canon as we have it today, that is, with the exception of the plays of Menander, no remotely complete example of which was available until the twentieth century. All Brumoy's plays have excerpts in French, some, complete translations, and additional comparisons with the work of Seneca, as well as some of the French neo-classicists, where a Latin play overlaps with a Greek.¹¹ (The volumes are not organized particularly methodically. Beginning with a full translation of Sophocles' *Oedipe*, complete with comparisons to other versions including that of Seneca, Brumoy proceeds to Sophocles' *Electre*. He continues with sections of Aeschylus' *Coéphores*, the whole of Sophocles' *Philoctete*, and two Euripides plays, *Hippolyte* and *Iphigénie en Aulide*. The second volume is a mixture of two whole Euripides (*Iphigénie en Tauride* and *Alceste*), parts of the remaining Aeschylus and Sophocles, with

¹¹ Walton (2006) ch. 2 and Appendix.

a note on the *Antigone* of Retrou, and thirteen other Euripides abstracts. The final volume has very confused page numberings but deals with comedy, all the plays of Aristophanes (almost all of *Les Oiseaux* and *Les Nuages* but a bare eight pages of *Lysistrata*), and Euripides' satyr play *Cyclops*, with various associated essays.

A translation of *Le Théâtre des Grecs* into English by Charlotte Lennox was published in 1759. Lennox was the daughter of Colonel James Ramsay, lieutenant-general of New York. She was New York born but lived in England from the age of 15. Her literary output included a novel, *The Female Friend*, and at least one comedy, *The Sister*, based on her own novel *Henrietta*, which was staged at Covent Garden in 1769. She was, in other words, no pushover, and she knew people in society. Her *Theatre of the Greeks* was dedicated to the Prince of Wales. She was at pains too to acknowledge assistance where she had requested it, from a number of luminaries, amongst them, the Earl of Cork and Orrery. When it came to looking at comedy she translates Brumoy's own reservations:

I was in doubt a long time, whether I should meddle at all with the Greek Comedy, both, because the pieces which remain are very few, the licentiousness of Aristophanes, their author, is exorbitant, and it is very difficult to draw from the performances of a single poet, a just idea of Greek comedy. . . . I may be partly reproached with an imperfect work, if, after having gone as deep as I could into the nature of the Greek tragedy, I did not at least sketch a draught of the comedy.¹²

What taxed the conscience of a Jesuit priest, though inclining him to stern censorship, was decorously sidetracked by Lennox, who not only removed all comedy and the satyr play into a single volume, but cunningly disowned it by handing most of it over to other hands:

In this volume the discourse on the Greek comedy, and the general Conclusion are translated by the celebrated author of the *Rambler* [Samuel Johnson]. The comedy of the Birds and that of Peace, by a young gentleman. The comedy of the Frogs, by the learned and ingenious Dr. Gregory Sharpe, Esq; The discourse upon the Cyclops, by Dr. Grainger, author of the translation of Tibullus.

Lennox makes no claim to a familiarity with Greek and declines to apply any awareness of the requirements of the stage to her work as translator. But, then, if Brumoy shows more interest in whether or not a funeral pyre was appropriate for a hero who had been consumed by lightning (see the opening example above taken from Euripides' *Suppliants*) than how the scene might

¹² Lennox (1759) iii. 123.

be staged, why should *his* translator into English be censured for a similar failing in curiosity?

The first complete Aeschylus was that of Robert Potter, published in Norwich in 1777, eighteen years after the publication of the Lennox/Brumoy, which it is probably safe to assume he knew.¹³ This was not quite the first translation of an Aeschylus play, credit for which goes to Thomas Morell for his *Prometheus in Chains* of 1773, the first of nearly forty different translations of the play to be published by the end of the nineteenth century, amongst them two entirely different ones from Elizabeth Barrett (1833 and 1850), one before and one after her marriage to Robert Browning, and one from Henry David Thoreau (1843). Morell had previously translated Euripides' *Hecuba* in 1749, some years after the failure of Richard West's *Hecuba* at Drury Lane in 1726. The Morell *Prometheus* seems at least to show an awareness of staging issues, including an exit for the Chorus before the earthquake which engulfs the protagonist. It was dedicated to David Garrick, the foremost actor of his generation and, by some accounts, the first to merit the description of 'theatre director'. Garrick in 1773 was still managing Drury Lane, though reaching the end of his illustrious career. Though interested in Greek myth, he never put *Prometheus* into the repertoire.

Potter translated the whole of Sophocles in 1788, by which time his health was failing, but it did result in an offer of a belated appointment as Prebendary at Norwich Cathedral. The decision to leave Sophocles till last may have been in part accident, but it could also have been influenced by the fact that Sophocles had received earlier attention, whereas he was the first to make a concerted assault on Aeschylus and Euripides. George Adams produced the seven plays of Sophocles in two volumes in 1729, which predates the French translations of *Oedipus* [*Tyrannus*], *Electra*, and *Philoctetes* by Father Brumoy, never mind the Lennox English versions.

Adams did provide the first English *Antigone*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Women of Trachis*, but others were already available as individual plays. Thomas Sheridan (grandfather of Richard Brinsley Sheridan) published his *Sophocles Philoctetes* in Dublin in 1725.¹⁴ Before that, Lewis Theobald, an editor of Shakespeare, had translated *Ajax*, *Electra*, and *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the first two published in 1714, the *Oedipus* a year later. Theobald also translated a couple of Aristophanes plays, but none of these, it seems, ever received a stage production. Theobald was a busy, if not especially successful,

¹³ See Stoker (1993), for a comprehensive account of the circumstances surrounding Potter's translation and the difficulty of his gaining recognition.

¹⁴ His son, also called Thomas, was the father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, theatre manager and author of, amongst other plays, *The Rivals*, *A Trip to Scarborough*, and *School for Scandal*.

original playwright too, something which introduces an awareness, as not seen previously, of the intention behind the work of the Greek tragedians; indeed, he claims an author's liberties: 'I have ventur'd rather to make an agreeable Innovation on, rather than be a Faithful Translation of, a Passage which contains too tedious and *Graphical* a Description of the *Pythian* Games to be relish'd at this time of day; and cools the Passion which it should excite, and keep warm by its Conciseness and Distress.'¹⁵

The passage to which Theobald refers is the Tutor's Messenger speech in which he brings false news of the death of Orestes in a chariot-race, part of a plan which he and Orestes devise in the opening scene, to help the plot to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Theobald simply cuts the speech from eighty-three lines in Sophocles to forty. A modern director might choose to do the same: but unwisely. This cut is a damaging example of Theobald's inability to see the whole stage situation. The two recipients of the admittedly extended account of the race are Clytemnestra and Electra. For Clytemnestra the news brings relief from fear of her son's seeking revenge for the killing of Agamemnon. For Electra it represents the final loss of hope that her tormented and abused life may find respite through her brother. Neither, of course, knows what the audience knows, which is that the real position is reversed. The plot is up and running and revenge close. The scene is prolonged to emphasize the stage situation, a striking example of the triangular scene which Sophocles perfected.

All that Theobald can bring in his notes is to demonstrate his learning by arguing that the Pythian Games were not founded until five years after Orestes' death, and an assumption that Sophocles thought his audience would be unaware of this. The rest of the translation shows evidence of the early eighteenth-century stage with characters apparently exiting by the proscenium doors. Sophocles' unique emphasis on the play as a mixture of revenge and monodrama, does, however, ring a bell with Theobald and Electra's bitter lyric exchange with the Chorus might well come straight from a heroic tragedy:

For if my noble Father unaveng'd,
Must moulder into Dust, and be forgot;
Whilst they, triumphant in their happy Guilt,
Laugh at the lame revenge that cannot reach 'em,
Farewell to Virtue; let religious Awe
No more restrain Mankind, but Outrage flourish. (245–50)

Compare that to the sedate, if more accurate, version by Humphrey Kitto:¹⁶

¹⁵ *Notes upon ELECTRA*, 80.

¹⁶ Sophocles (1962), trans. Kitto.

For if the dead shall lie there, nothing but dust and ashes,
 And they who killed him do not suffer death in return,
 Then, for all mankind,
 Fear of the Gods, respect for men, have vanished.

There had been an even earlier Sophocles' *Electra*, a wholly unexpected exhortation from Christopher Wase in 1649 to Elizabeth, second daughter of Charles the First to follow Electra's example and avenge her father.¹⁷ Charles had been executed in January of 1649 and the 14-year-old Elizabeth was to die in prison the following year. The translation as a translation, unsurprisingly, lacks a redeeming feature.

What is often claimed as the first translation of a Greek tragedy into English of a Euripides play turns out not to be, on two grounds. *Jocasta* by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe is based on Euripides' tragedy, *Phoenissae*, the plot of which covers similar ground to Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*.¹⁸ There are bits of Euripides lurking in the *Jocasta* but with some passages cut, others transposed, its status is unconvincing. There also happens to have been an earlier play which has a far better claim to be the first Greek tragedy in English, also cut, though mainly in the choral odes. Lady Jane Lumley's *Iphigenia at Aulis* is believed to date from around 1555 but was not published until 1909, as a Malone Society Reprint. This was all of two hundred and thirty years before the complete Euripides volumes from Wodhull and (almost) Potter. Between, there were a number of individual plays translated in a variety of circumstances and for a variety of reasons, by Richard West (*Hecuba*, 1726, and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1749), Thomas Morell (another *Hecuba*, 1749—twenty-four years before his *Prometheus in Chains*), Charlotte Lennox (*Alcestis*, *Hippolitus* [sic], *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1759) and James Bannister (*Phoenissae*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Troades*, and *Orestes*, 1780). Of these, West's *Hecuba* is the most significant in the present context because it was actually performed at Drury Lane in 1726. Euripides' play opens with the ghost of Polydorus informing the audience of his murder by the treacherous Polymestor. The play is set in the aftermath of the sack of Troy by the Greeks, as is Euripides' *Trojan Women*. The central figure is again Hecuba, Priam's queen in Troy, now reduced to the status of prisoner-of-war and about to become a slave. She had sent her son Polydorus away from the city to the protection of Polymestor who has treacherously murdered him.

¹⁷ See Hall and Macintosh (2005) and Walton (2006).

¹⁸ It was presented at Gray's Inn in 1566 and published as 'Phoenissæ, English, Jocasta: a Tragedie written in Greke by Euripides, translated and digested into Actes by G. Gascoigne, and F. Kinwelmershe', in G. Gascoigne (1572) *A hundreth sundrie Flowres bounde up in one small Poesie, etc.* London.

Hecuba's revenge on Polymestor, which includes murdering his sons and blinding him, forms the play's climactic action.

West seems to have felt that introducing the play with the ghost would be unclear to an eighteenth-century audience who were not necessarily familiar with the details of the Trojan War; or, perhaps, would detract from the eventual shock of the discovery of the boy's body washed up on the beach. So he wrote his own exposition scene at the 'Pavilion of Polymnestor [*sic*]' where the plot is set in motion with Polymnestor's lines:

This Polydor, this son of Hecuba,
Is now no more. Rise then, exult my Heart.
Arise secure, his Life, his Treasure's thine.

No ghost, so Hecuba enters in Scene 2, with the lines a direct, if scarcely elegant, version of Euripides:

Lead me, ye virgins, your unhappy Queen,
Yes, once your queen, but now your fellow slave.

West's other innovation was to transfer the speaking role of the Chorus to a single character called Iphis, who concludes the play with a thoroughly un-Euripidean ending:

Let not vain Mortals impiously pronounce
The high decrees of heaven or good or bad. . . .
But let us learn to bear, through every State
Those pleasures and those Pains the Fates allot.
In this short precept is our Duty seen;
Do what you wish, may to yourself be done.

These changes notwithstanding, the play can be claimed as a translation in a way that the next Drury Lane *Hecuba* could not. The version by John Dunlap used by Garrick for his production in 1762 has Polydore alive, and with plenty to say for himself, before dying on the final page. A mass of other characters unknown to Euripides include Eriphilus, Eumelus, Melanthius, Lycus, Cratander, and Sigea—but no Polymestor. At least Dunlap's version was received through to the end by its audience. Richard West, not entirely to his surprise ('I foresaw there would be some Difficulty in making it agreeable in its original Purity, to the taste of an English Audience'), saw the production come to an early conclusion as a result of 'a Rout of Vandals in the Galleries'.¹⁹

Hecuba is of special interest as a sample play because, in terms of numbers of translations from Euripides, it holds a major position as one of the most

¹⁹ West (1726) p. iv.

popular for translators alongside *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, and *Bacchae*, all plays which revolve around a major female role. There were at least a dozen new translations of *Hecuba* published in the latter half of the nineteenth century alone. 2004–5 saw four new translations appear with London publishers, two separate ones from Faber & Faber only months apart, each related to a new production.²⁰ This is not the place for a review of these productions, or for speculation as to why this play should have featured so consciously in the public gaze at this time.²¹ It is exceptional, even in Euripides, in showing how concerted aggression can trigger a ferocious and fearsome backlash. As a number of modern scholars are beginning to trace, various plays, and not only those of Euripides, have acquired a vogue according to contemporary social and political circumstance. Translations have frequently adjusted not only to accommodate the language of the target time but also the reverberations of a particular situation or turn of phrase.

Aristophanes, the most overtly political of all ancient dramatists, has travelled least well in translation. Despite the presence of theatre men such as Richard Cumberland, Henry Fielding, and James Robinson Planché amongst early translators, the temptation to modernize both reference and characters proved so compelling as to anchor *Clouds*, *Wealth*, and *Birds* solidly in the translators' environment. Aristophanes' perceived parochialism had ensured that his plays were exiled from the stage, if not immediately, at least by the time of New Comedy in the late fourth century BC, virtually never to return until late in the twentieth century. There were reasons of taste too. Aristophanes without the bawdy and the scatology is difficult to enthuse over and certainly not to the taste of most of the translators mentioned above. *Lysistrata's* reputation for licentiousness was powerful enough to keep it off the British stage until 1957, and the first translation did not appear in print until that of C. A. Wheelwright in 1837, with only three other 'free' versions (i.e. bowdlerized) before the Samuel Smith edition of 1896 with the scandalous Aubrey Beardsley illustrations. *Wealth* (*Ploutos*), as a fable about the healing of the blind god of money, was a sound enough moral tale to appeal solely on the grounds of its plot, but most of the other plays, with the possible exception of *Clouds* and *Birds*, proved too insubstantial in edited versions to engage the reader and too coarse to merit publication in their entirety.

²⁰ Euripides' *Hecuba*, in a new version by Frank McGuinness (2004) from a literal by Fionnuala Murphy, Donmar Warehouse, Sept. 2004.

²¹ See esp. P. Stothard, 'Queen of the Knives', *Times Literary Supplement*, Fri. 24 Sept. 2004: 16, for a review of the performance history of *Hecuba*; and 'Hit me here, and here, and here', *TLS*, 15 Apr. 2005: 18, for a review of the Harrison translation at the Albery Theatre with Vanessa Redgrave as *Hecuba*.

As for Menander, the lack of a manuscript of any complete play until the late 1950s ensured that interest in his work was largely speculative. The several predictions about the outcome of the plot of *The Woman from Samos* from the segments available before 1969, all proved inaccurate when a more or less complete text finally surfaced. Translations of Menander have, unsurprisingly, all been in a modern idiom.

The return of Greek plays to the British stage was in the original Greek, and inspired by the well-researched academic exercises at Oxford and Cambridge in the 1880s. The public theatre in Britain had to wait until Frank Benson's *The Oresteian Trilogy* at Stratford in April 1904, and Gilbert Murray's translation of Euripides' *Hippolytus* with the Vedrenne/Barker management at the Royal Court Theatre a month later, for the worlds of literature and professional theatre to combine. Others quickly followed.²²

It is an interesting comment on theatre history that a tradition of recreating the plays of classical Greece, as opposed to the stories of classical Greece, is really only as old as is the emergence of the director in the theatre as interpreter/instigator/initiator. With the rise of the director came the interrogation of playtexts as working potential rather than completed artefacts. The classics of the world's repertoire became available for renewal in contemporary contexts. This makes a demand for translators capable of seeing what is dramatic within the texts and rendering it in a manner that directors and actors can develop. There will always be room for radical readings and direct parallels, as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides renewed myth for its novelty as much as for its familiarity. There is also a constant invitation to return to those initial texts to see whether they carry within them some essential qualities which will enable the theatre of the future to learn from, as well as build upon, the theatre of the past.

What, then, may be learnt from looking at these first translations?—and a similar exercise could easily have been mounted on the whole play translation industry that mushroomed during the nineteenth century.

Though making value judgements on a play translation is the most inexact of exercises, each reader looking for something different from any other, it does seem that, historically, the 'better' translators are those who were aware of the nature of a dramatic script, and the manner in which it accommodated visual image, dramatic rhythm, and performance potential, besides having a solid knowledge of the source language. As translation may involve incorporating a means of expression which is either more or less (and sometimes both) than what appears in the surface source, then some liberty may need to

²² See Hall and Macintosh (2005), especially the Appendix of productions compiled by Amanda Wrigley.

be extended in favour of the target reader and player, and a greater liberty in favour of the audience as the 'true target'. Horace offers us a classical precedent when he advises against 'word for word' translation 'like the slavish translator'.²³ Right the way back to Lady Lumley and her *Iphigenia*, up through the inventive and manifold 'versions' of plays with Greek and Roman settings from Dryden onwards, 'translations' of classical themes and classical tragedies have been more inclined to demonstrate the concerns and priorities of the target culture rather than the source. If this is true for the reading public, how much more appropriate for a performance script of a tragedy or comedy? This does not necessarily imply downgrading of the language of the original, but a search for an equivalent, to use the term on which translators in any field must always resort, which recognizes, perhaps appropriates, the originals and dresses them in new clothes. If this means neologisms which a modern audience may understand only through association, then the precedent is there in Aeschylus and in Aristophanes. Some of that comedian's single coinages last for several lines of text (*lopadotemachoselachogaleokraniroleipsanodrimupotrimmatosilphioparaomelitokatakechumenokichlepekossuphophattoperisteralektruonoptekephalliokigklopeleiolagôosiraioabaphêtraganopterugôn*, for example, *Women in Power*, 1169–75). Language is supremely important, of course it is, but it can afford to be today's graphic language, a forceful language driven by character as well as by situation.

The final issue addressed by these first translators is the individuality of the playwrights. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are so different that each merits a separate strategy if Greek tragedy is not to appear as some sort of literary conglomerate, with a single philosophy and a single intent. With comedy it is easier, partly because Greek old comedy, Greek and Roman new comedy are such individualistic forms. Ultimately, then, all previous translations (and there have been almost a hundred *Agamemmons*, eighty-nine *Antigones*, sixty *Alcestises*) point to the adaptability, flexibility, and sheer capacity for resurrection of an art form that dies after every performance.

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Translation and the ‘Surreptitious Classic’: Obscenity and Translatability

Deborah H. Roberts

But foul Descriptions are offensive still,
Either for being Like, or being Ill.
For who, without a Qualm, hath ever lookt,
on Holy Garbage, tho’ by Homer Cookt?
The Earl of Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse*¹

Translation constitutes one of the central modes of the reception of Greek and Latin literature. But the translation of certain works of ancient literature has been regarded in some periods and places as problematic or impossible, not because of the inherent difficulty of all translation or the difficulty of these works in other respects but because they directly express or describe the sexual or scatological. The vocabulary of sex, of elimination, and of the parts of the body associated with sex and elimination is notoriously hard to translate. Expressions in the source language are often metaphorical, and thus pose the usual challenges of figurative speech; and if (as often happens) the target language lacks any unmarked terminology in these areas, the translator may be confronted by a choice between the scientific, the euphemistic, and the colloquial. The translator also faces a problem that is more fundamental and more specific. Cultures vary widely both in their construction and categorization of sexual and excremental behaviour and in the acceptable context of usage and emotional register associated with sexual and excremental language.² And where the target culture considers such language obscene, the translator may encounter an implicit or explicit (even legally enforced) taboo that calls into question or complicates the translatability of the text.

¹ Roscommon (1709) 9.

² Nida (1964) 114; Wolfart (1986); Crisafulli (1997); Perez Quintero and Toledano Buendía (2001) 186; Bauer (2003).

Definitions of the obscene are varied and contested, as is its relationship to the sexual, the erotic, and the pornographic.³ As a rule, however, the term 'obscene' suggests both the sexual or scatological referent of an utterance and the social construction of that utterance as itself indecent, shocking, immoral, or inclined to corrupt, and thus as unspeakable at least in certain (usually public) contexts or to certain audiences.⁴ The obscene may thus include not only language regarded as specifically obscene (such as the English 'four-letter words') but any language directly or indirectly referring to sexuality and scatology and regarded as taboo. And whether or not a particular expression is conceived of as obscene in the source culture, it may be regarded as untranslatable, not because the target language possesses no semantic or functional equivalents but because the existing equivalents are considered obscene and have been rendered unavailable by legal or social constraints.

The presence of obscenity in a work that is considered a classic (even if a marginal one) may pose particular problems for the translator.⁵ The phrase 'surreptitious classic', used of Petronius' *Satyricon* by two twentieth-century translators, describes a work that has a certain cultural status—in this case, as one of the surviving texts from Graeco-Roman antiquity—but has been largely read and circulated privately because of its taboo elements.⁶ Evoking as it does both public recognition and secrecy, the phrase might also suggest the combination of openness and concealment practised by the translator when a text is canonical—chosen with a presupposition of public value, revered for generations, the object of scholarship and interpretation—but includes elements that are for some reason unacceptable in the cultural context of the translation. Chief among such elements in Greek and Roman literature are the use of specifically obscene or taboo words, erotic or anatomical explicitness, and the representation of erotic or scatological activity in general and of homosexuality and other sexual practices regarded in certain target cultures as deviant.

Some texts that contain taboo elements, such as Plato's *Symposium*, with its evocation of homoeroticism, have retained their centrality in the canon of ancient literature while also leading a kind of shadowy separate existence—in the case of the *Symposium*, as a recognized classic of gay literature.⁷ Others, such as the works

³ See Michelson (1993) pp. xi–xiii; Pease (2000) 34; McDonald (2006) 12.

⁴ On definitions of obscenity (and problems with such definitions) see Henderson (1991) 2–13, 240–2; Richlin (1992a) 3–31; Michelson (1993) pp. xi–xiii; Pease (2000) 34; Lewis (2003) 143, 152; Halliwell (2004); McDonald (2006) 12. On the translation of obscenity see Crisafulli (1997) on Dante, Wolfart (1986) on Cree literature.

⁵ See Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) 5: 'One of the "norms" mediated in that [the nineteenth] century in connection with translation of those [Graeco-Roman] classics was that they needed to be kept on the "classical" level'; cf. also Lefevere (1992) 92; Crisafulli (1997).

⁶ Dinnage (1953) p. xi; Arrowsmith (1959) p. xvi.

⁷ On the centrality of Plato to the homosexual apologetics of such writers as J. A. Symonds at Oxford in the nineteenth century see Dowling (1994) esp. ch. 3.

of Catullus, of Aristophanes, and of Juvenal, have been the objects of a kind of selective canonicity, required reading for some but not others, or for those others only with the naughty bits left out; and still others, such as Petronius' *Satyricon* and the *Epigrams* of Martial, have been marginalized for significant periods.⁸ But all these texts, and others which like them give voice to the erotic or obscene, have until quite recently presented the translator with the challenge of a work whose register (elite because classical, but with 'low' elements) is mixed and whose audience therefore should not be. This challenge was perhaps greatest during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period in which increased discomfort with the translation of obscenity was accompanied by an increase in legal obstacles to the publication of obscenity in both England and the United States. Most translations from this period have recourse to a variety of strategic distortions; the exceptions to this rule were generally published in limited editions, and if reprinted for a wider audience were subject to expurgation or bowdlerization.⁹

In this chapter, I investigate approaches to the translation of obscenity from Greek and Latin into English between 1800 and about 1950. Even with this limitation to one chronological period and one target language, the topic is a broad and diverse one. To further limit it for the purposes of this volume, I focus specifically on those aspects of the translator's dilemma and the translator's approach that seem to me most strikingly to engage the interface between the classical (elite, public) and the obscene (low, private).

My aim here is not to draw any simple contrast between expurgated and unexpurgated translations, but to consider the complexity and diversity of both as responses to the 'surreptitious classic'. Nor do I wish to suggest a simple narrative of repression followed by later freedom. Foucault's critique of what he calls the 'repressive hypothesis' warns us against any such account: he argues both that an era of apparent repression involved an extraordinary attentiveness to sexuality in various realms and that our ostensibly liberated and liberating sexuality is still constructed by discourses of political and social power. But Foucault himself recognizes that the period with which I will primarily be concerned saw an increase in what he calls 'a control over enunciations': 'where and when it was possible to talk about such things became much more strictly defined; in which circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships. Areas were thus established, if not of utter silence, at least of tact and discretion.'¹⁰ Translation is one such area. And where translators

⁸ Sullivan (1991) 305 notes that in the mid-nineteenth century 'Martial's reputation as an underground classic was going up just as his esteem in academe was declining'.

⁹ Boyer (1968); F. Lewis (1976); Bassnett and France (2006) 52–5; specifically on the reception of obscenity in Catullus during this period see Venuti (1995) 81–98; Gaisser (2001) pp. xxxii–xli; on Martial, see Sullivan (1991) 300–6; Sullivan and Boyle (1996) pp. xx–xxxvii; on Petronius and other prose fiction see Roberts (2006) and (forthcoming).

¹⁰ Foucault (1978) i. 18; and see Michelson (1993) 19–27.

of classical texts are concerned, a kind of double tact is involved, reflecting not only concern for the sensibilities or moral well-being of the readership but also concern for the status of the text. Those translators who either excise the obscene or obfuscate its presence seek to defend and protect their authors as well as to spare their audience's sensibilities; those who, published in limited editions, need have less concern for their readers (as a select group, as constituting a private rather than a public audience, or as aficionados of the obscene) show at times a similar concern for their authors' standing as classics and at times a kind of reverse (or perverse?) concern for their standing as classics of the obscene.

In his essay, 'Taboo Language in Translation', Eduardo Crisafulli takes as a case study a nineteenth-century translation of Dante's *Inferno* (Henry Francis Cary's *The Vision*) that was regarded by contemporaries as strikingly faithful in spite of its euphemistic renderings of Dante's scatological language. Crisafulli argues that whereas a source-oriented approach would regard the translator's euphemisms as departures 'from lexical faithfulness',¹¹ a target-oriented approach can better explain Cary's choices, which were in accord with the norms of his period not only because the closest lexical equivalents were currently taboo in public usage, but also—and more importantly—because they were considered inappropriate specifically to the register of serious poetry in English. Translators of ancient literature in the same period certainly reflect an analogous dual concern—with public usage and with the poetic register—but I would argue that the presumed elite register of the source text (more of a given in the nineteenth-century English-speaking world for Greek and Latin authors than for Dante) plays a more important role than that of the translation, which is to a large extent seen as both representing and paying homage to its original.

In what follows I will consider the approaches of translators both as reflected in their prefaces and commentaries and as exemplified in their practice. Since my focus here is on reception in a particular (broadly defined) chronological context, I will have little to say about more recent scholarly investigations of ancient attitudes towards sexuality and the obscene, though these are obviously germane to the larger project of which this chapter is a part.¹² And since I want to offer here an exploration of the varieties of approaches to ancient obscenity throughout a particular period, rather than a historical account of shifts in attitudes across that period, I will not be commenting on such shifts, although they do of course exist, and translators occasionally take note of them.

¹¹ Crisafulli (1997) 241.

¹² The literature on ancient sexuality in recent decades is enormous; specifically on the obscene, see esp. Adams (1982); Henderson (1991); Richlin (1992a, 1992b), Rosen and Marks (1999); Halliwell (2004); Rosen (2006).

DEFENDING THE CLASSIC, PROTECTING THE CLASSIC

Throughout our period, translators of expurgated editions frequently include in their introductions some explanation for or defence of the taboo elements in their author. Such defences by and large serve the purpose of asserting the text's entitlement as a work of high literature in face of what is often described as 'shocking' language or content; they may also indirectly justify the text as an object of translation.

The most common (and most fundamental) defence cites cultural difference. Ancient customs were different from ours; what shocks us didn't shock the Greeks or Romans; they were willing to speak of things we don't express openly. This defence is sometimes accompanied by an account of the origins of cultural difference—as the product, for example, of either primitivism or decadence. Translators of Aristophanes are inclined to identify old comedy's religious context, its supposed village origins, or the lower-class elements in its audience as an explanation for the regrettable 'phallic element'¹³ and J. M. Mitchell, in his translation of Petronius, speaks of 'the inroads upon Roman morality of the degraded vices of the east'.¹⁴ It is clear, however, that for many translators merely citing cultural difference is not a fully adequate defence; these also seek to distinguish the author in some way from his culture of origin or to palliate his apparent participation in its indecency. Theodore Martin sees Catullus as a youth from the provinces initially tempted by the 'fascinations' of urban life, and supposes that his love for Lesbia was a 'great preservative against vulgar debauchery'.¹⁵ George Lamb calls Catullus's mind 'as little sullied by the grossness of the age, as was possible for one invited to the pleasures of the times by the patronage of his superiors';¹⁶ and in the introduction to his Loeb translation of Martial, Walter Ker warns his readers against inferring Martial's immorality from his work, since 'he had to adapt himself to the manner of his age or starve'.¹⁷

These defences of the author's own moral purity may be associated with any of several justifications of what he writes: that the obscene element is merely conventional; that it is incidental to the work's real effect or aim—and thus essentially irrelevant—or that it is at its service in some important way. We find the first two, for example, in William Aiken's *Catullus*, in which the

¹³ Frere (1909) (first pub. 1839) p. viii; Rogers (1910) p. liv. On the association in antiquity between social class or rural origin and obscenity see Halliwell (2004); Rosen (2006).

¹⁴ Mitchell (1923) 33. See also discussion of Frere's views in Venuti (1995) 77–81.

¹⁵ Martin (1875) 15–16, 22.

¹⁶ Lamb (1821) i. p. xlii. On Lamb's discussion of Catullus see Venuti (1995) 84–93.

¹⁷ Ker (1919) i. p. xvi.

translator and editor notes that 'language and thoughts from the Roman gutter [were] acceptable as a poetic convention in those days' and talks of our enjoying Catullus 'in spite of the ribaldry'.¹⁸ Satire and satirical literature in general are particularly open to the third justification, since the author may be said to describe execrable behaviour only in order to emphasize its evils and so put off the reader:¹⁹ 'Juvenal's realism . . . is always repulsive, never alluring or prurient';²⁰ Petronius may have thought that it was 'too late to protest with hope of success' (hence the absence of any expressed outrage except in the poem), 'but there is no doubt as to his attitude towards²¹ [immorality and sexual inversion]'²² In other variants of what we might call the 'higher purpose' defence, Frere suggests—though without endorsing it—that the Greeks had a cathartic understanding of comedy in which 'the lower emotions and desires might . . . be purged away by free and outspoken comedy';²³ and Rogers that Aristophanes' 'coarseness, so repulsive to ourselves, so amusing to an Athenian audience, was introduced . . . for the express purpose of counterbalancing the extreme gravity and earnestness of the play'.²⁴

For some translators, however, the author's virtue and the acceptability of the work in question are best defended by the claim that the obscenity in a text is essentially good-hearted. Thus, in the introduction to his 1908 translation of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, Lowe argues that the 'candour' of the Greeks, though it goes beyond what we would allow, 'is never disgraced by the cold brutality and coarseness which disfigure the pages of Roman literature of the imperial period';²⁵ while Gaselee (in his revision of Adlington's *Apuleius* for the Loeb Classical Library) notes that although Apuleius's stories are 'of doubtful morality' they give the impression of 'fun and high spirits';²⁶ Dudley Fitts, translating *Lysistrata* in 1954, denies that Aristophanes' indecency is 'a leering indecency'.²⁷ We might call this the 'good clean fun' school of thought.²⁸

¹⁸ Aiken (1950) 188–9.

¹⁹ Hopkins (2005) 220. On the early role of intent in obscenity cases see F. Lewis (1976) 6–7.

²⁰ Ramsay (1918) p. viii.

²¹ Mitchell (1923) 33–4.

²² Cf. William Gifford's comments on Juvenal in Evans and Gifford (1852) p. xxxv: 'Where vice, of whatever nature, formed the immediate object of reprobation, it has not been spared in the translation.' James Cranstoun (1867) 16 expresses regret that in the case of Catullus 'we deplore the turpitude of many of his lines, yea many in which we cannot claim for him the accorded privilege of the satirist'.

²³ Frere (1909) p. viii.

²⁴ Rogers (1911) p. ix.

²⁵ Lowe (1908) p. viii.

²⁶ Adlington/Gaselee (1915) p. vii.

²⁷ Fitts (1954) p. viii.

²⁸ Cf. Seldes (1930) p. x.

These various defences of the author (which may of course occur in combination) also serve, as I have suggested, to provide the translator with a justification for his choice of text—a justification he presumably could do without were he translating (for example) Virgil or Cicero. But translators of expurgated editions of classical texts often seek also to justify their decision to conceal or modify those aspects of the text they consider unworthy of the author, inappropriate to their intended audience, or otherwise unpublishable. In the preface to the second edition of his translation of Petronius, J. M. Mitchell responds to criticism of the first edition:

As to the charge of ‘tampering with and toning down’ the text, I merely deny it. There are, I admit, euphemisms here and there. But this, I submit, is entirely in keeping with the policy of making use of a modern idiom. . . . These occasional euphemisms are, in point of fact, better representations of what Petronius meant than literal translations would have been.²⁹

Mitchell might at first seem simply to be making the same point we find in Patric Dickinson’s introduction to his *Aristophanes*: ‘These translations are as near the original words as present taste will admit. Asterisks or the three-word army vocabulary are obviously impossible. The Greeks liked their phallic jokes straight; we do not.’³⁰ Both translators argue in essence that they are doing nothing different from translating the text into modern English idiom. But where Dickinson—in an unintentionally Aristophanic choice of words?—simply emphasizes his audience’s taste (we don’t like phallic jokes straight), Mitchell argues that what he is doing better represents what Petronius really meant.

In a sense, then, Mitchell claims that he is simply doing his author justice, and in fact protecting him from misrepresentation. Protection clearly goes beyond defence. To defend the author is to justify his use of execrable material or language; to protect him calls for the translator’s active participation in showing him either as he truly is or as he should be. Charles Stuttaford (although he argues for outright omission where Mitchell makes the case for euphemism) takes a similar position:

I think most people will agree with me that many of the poems of Catullus are not fit to be put into English. Indeed, *an English translation of these poems would give a very false view of Catullus and his circle* [my italics]. Many of the epithets that he poured upon his opponents and the charges he brought against them were mere abuse and well understood to be such by his contemporaries.³¹

²⁹ Mitchell (1923) p. xii.

³⁰ Dickinson (1957) p. xvii.

³¹ Stuttaford (1912) p. viii. For an interesting parallel see Trivedi (2006) 349 on translators during this period who tone down Indian texts ‘not so much to traduce the Indian texts as to protect them against a knee-jerk reaction by the prudish and sanctimonious western reader.’

PROTECTING THE READER, PROTECTING SOCIETY

It isn't only the author, of course, who needs protection. Translators in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century regularly suggest that they are sparing their readers material or language that would be shocking (or repulsive, or distasteful) to the translators' contemporaries. And behind this concern with offensiveness there sometimes lurks another concern (reflected in some of the defences I cited earlier: it's good clean fun, it has a high moral purpose) that the audience might be not only shocked but morally corrupted by these texts.

This concern is often made explicit in the legal rulings against obscenity and in attacks against obscene literature (including translations of classical texts) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by organizations such as the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.³² A series of articles in the *New York Times* makes clear that the possible impact on inappropriate readers—and the resulting impact on society as a whole—was a central issue in the 1922 prosecution of the publishing firm Boni and Liveright for the limited edition publication of W. C. Firebaugh's translation of Petronius' *Satyricon*. At the time when these articles appeared, the suit had failed, largely because the presiding magistrate saw the *Satyricon* as defended by its status as a classic. This status was understood to be supported by evidence of scholarly work on the text, a text significant not only because of its influence on the later literary tradition and its usefulness as a source of information on the ancient world, but also because its antiquity makes clear that its customs are not ours.³³

In the face of a second possible suit, Boni & Liveright (who had meanwhile filed a countersuit for libel) argued both that the text was a classic and that the fact that it had been published in a limited edition (at the then quite steep price of \$20) meant that Firebaugh's translation was available only to 'a select clientele of mature and incorruptible persons'.³⁴ But John Sumner of the Vice Society had pointed out that the publishers were offering the book in batches of fifty at a reduced price to other booksellers, and that when he sent someone to buy the book, that person's business 'card was accepted as sufficient evidence of his high moral and intellectual caliber and the only question asked was whether he had \$20'.³⁵ What follows makes clear that the fact of the work's being a translation was of particular significance, since Sumner further

³² On the legal understanding of the obscene as tending to corrupt see T. Lewis (2003).

³³ 'Censor Again Loses in Fight on Books' (1922); see discussion in Dardis (1995) 158–61 and Gilmer (1970) 64–8.

³⁴ "Satyricon" Again up for Prosecution', *New York Times*, 17 Oct. 1922:12.

³⁵ 'Vice Society Sued for \$40,000', *ibid.* 29 Sept. 1922: 9.

asserted that: 'Petronius is now to be found in the original Latin in the libraries under lock and key where it can be obtained by bona fide scholars and research workers. It is in difficult Latin and automatically restricts its readers to about one in ten thousand or one in a hundred thousand.'³⁶ Thus, in spite of the fact that (for Sumner) there was 'no vicious or perverse idea or action as well as hardly any filthy word in our language, which this book does not contain', it was the book's accessibility in translation that was the real cause for alarm:

The publication of this book in English is an entering wedge for the publication of many volumes which have been uniformly banned in this country. . . . If the *Satyricon* while in Latin form could be responsible for the Seeley dinner [the occasion of a notorious society scandal featuring the 'exotic dancer' known as Little Egypt], what effect can be expected from putting translations into the hand of whomever [*sic*] will buy it?³⁷

Sumner's words reflect a concern that obscenity in translations of classical texts will not only shock but corrupt the reader, and that this corruption will have a broad effect on society. In particular, Sumner fears that the *Satyricon* will fall into the hands of people who are immature, who are not of high moral or intellectual calibre, and who are not 'bona fide scholars and research workers'.³⁸

In 'Legislating Morality: Victorian and Modern Legal Responses to Pornography', Tom Lewis comments on the problem the Victorian courts faced in distinguishing 'between works of high art and classic literature (which were beneficial and uplifting) and obscenity (which was depraving and corrupting)'. He also notes that the central concern of those seeking to legislate on such issues was 'not the existence or consumption of obscene materials *per se*' but their availability 'to a much wider reading and viewing public'.³⁹ 'It was all very well . . . for the middle class man to indulge himself with expensive works of erotica in the privacy of his study. It was quite another for cheaper milder forms to be visible openly in the public streets, or to fall into the hands of women and children within the sanctity of the home itself.'⁴⁰ In Sumner's pronouncements, fears about the role of translation in corrupting the general population and effacing any proper distinction between private and public and between different classes of reader work to deprive the classic of any privileged status. For translators of the classics, however, that status is a given, and it is precisely the privileged status of the classic that conditions these

³⁶ 'Vice Society Sued for \$40,000', *ibid.* 29 Sept. 1922: 9.

³⁷ For an account of the Seeley Dinner, see Dunlop (2000) 167–99.

³⁸ See F. Lewis (1976) 6–7 on some nineteenth-century legal arguments about the significance of the audience in adjudicating obscenity.

³⁹ T. Lewis (2003) 150, 152. On the anxieties engendered by the growth of literacy see also Thomas (1969) chs. 5, 7; Pease (2000) 39–56; Sutter (2003).

⁴⁰ T. Lewis (2003) 153.

translators' response to issues of class in their readership and in the diction they adopt.⁴¹

CLASS AND THE CLASSIC

The intended audience of expurgated versions of the classics sometimes explicitly evokes the wider readership that contributed to legal and moral concerns about obscenity in our period. Two versions of Catullus (one published in England in 1899 and one in the United States in 1950) and one of Petronius (published in England in 1922, second edition 1923) exemplify the range in the expected class and educational background of those to whom such editions might be addressed.

McNaghten's 1899 *The Story of Catullus*, which weaves selections from Catullus' work into a biographical narrative, begins with a question about readership and answers it somewhat tentatively:

Who will read this book? A scholar here and there, I dare to hope, who would not willingly pass by anything that concerns Catullus, a barrister, a business-man (who knows?) if, as I believe, there are still some who find, after a long day's work, their best refreshment in the classics.

Perhaps even an Eton boy who has read Catullus at school, and is a little ashamed at having cared so much for any part of his work, or the sister of an Eton boy, if I may speak out all my dreams, who has read in Tennyson of the 'tenderest of Roman poets', and would learn something which her brother refuses to tell of that Catullus 'whose dead songster never dies'.⁴²

Note the translator's varied evocations of his possible readers and their class standing. The 'business-man' is clearly a long shot ('who knows?'), but the barrister seems more likely; McNaghten dares to hope for a scholar, thinks 'perhaps' he may reach an Eton boy, and can only dream of the Eton boy's sister. The audience he yearns for clearly inhabits a somewhat rarefied social level (barely extending to businessmen) and includes both boys and girls. It is hardly surprising that this version is heavily expurgated, omitting virtually all the poems that might be thought obscene,⁴³ and presents us with a Catullus carefully mediated by the blameless Tennyson.

⁴¹ On class and diction in translations of Petronius see Roberts (2006) 52–4.

⁴² McNaghten (1899) p. vii.

⁴³ For a starkly contrasting attitude towards girls as readers, see Thornley's prefatory letter to his 1657 translation of Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, which addresses itself 'to young beauties' and is filled with sexual humour and double-entendres, Thornley (1925) 9–11. (This letter is omitted in J. M. Edmonds's Loeb revision of Thornley, Thornley/Edmonds 1916.)

A few decades later, shortly after the First World War, J. M. Mitchell's translation of Petronius was designed for what he clearly felt was a novel audience: students at universities other than Oxford and Cambridge, with little or no background in ancient literature and language. His desire to make knowledge of antiquity more accessible, he tells us, grew in part out of his experience in the army, as did his 'infinitely increased respect for the British rank and file'. Like McNaghten, however, he offers his intended readers a thoroughly expurgated version, with the most obscene parts left in the Latin to which (as he has told us) he does not expect his readers to have access.

A strikingly similar audience provides the impetus for William Aiken's post-Second World War collection of translations of Catullus, most by others, some his own, arranged by topic ('irresponsible youth', 'love at the first sight', 'new friends and foes', etc.). Aiken includes all the poems, but in renderings that avoid outright obscenity and explicit sexuality. He prefaces the collection with an account of how he came to create it ('The Occasion') and of his intended audience, beginning with a narrative of a wartime encounter in Italy with an American airman and a British tank officer. The former was 'restless, angry, and bored'; the latter was reading Catullus 'neatly bound in old vellum', and gave such an enthusiastic account (somewhat implausibly reported word for word by Aiken) that the American pilot, who had considered poetry 'sissy stuff', confessed that night, before falling asleep 'with an eloquent flow of obscenity', that the tanker 'might almost have taught [him] something if he had kept on'. After the war, teaching required humanities courses to 'indifferent and resentful' American veterans studying engineering, Aiken was inspired to lecture on Catullus and to produce this volume, which includes all the poems of Catullus but comments on and carefully tones down their occasional offensiveness as 'shocking to modern sensibilities'.⁴⁴ Aiken's deprecating remarks on his author's deployment of 'language and thoughts from the Roman gutter' are oddly juxtaposed with his almost admiring description of the young airman's 'eloquent flow of obscenity'.⁴⁵ What Aiken finds eloquent in the airman he finds repellent in Catullus; what's more, he takes pains to disguise in Catullus language and thoughts he is well aware are familiar to his audience of veterans. And he does so even though his intention as a teacher is to show his students that 'these old Romans were men of living flesh and blood whose private world and private lives were in no way different from our own today'.⁴⁶

The expurgated text may thus be directed not only at audiences presumed ignorant or intolerant of the obscene by virtue of class standing or age or both (McNaghten's Eton boy and his sister) but also at those who by virtue of

⁴⁴ Aiken (1950) 9–13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 12, 188.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 13. Cf. Mitchell (1923) 4.

experience and class standing are well acquainted with the obscene (Mitchell's and Aiken's veterans and middle-class or lower-middle-class university students). Although both Mitchell and Aiken attribute their suppression of obscenity to concern for contemporary sensibilities, it seems clear that they are at least as strongly motivated by a desire to present their author to this new audience as deserving of the respect a classic should be shown. The prefatory contrast between Aiken's airman, inarticulate except in obscenity, and the much better-educated British officer, with his eloquent discourse on the beauties of Catullus, itself makes clear why Catullus must be made to resemble the latter rather than the former.

The association of obscene language with the lower classes provides another motivation for expurgation as well.⁴⁷ In his 1790 *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, Alexander Tytler makes the following argument:

The ancients, in the expression of resentment or contempt, made use of many epithets and appellations which sound extremely shocking to our more polished ears, because we never hear them employed but by the meanest and most degraded of the populace. By similar reasoning we must conclude, that those expressions conveyed no such mean or shocking ideas to the ancients, since we find them used by the most dignified and exalted characters.⁴⁸

Tytler goes on to argue that to allow such characters to use in English the sort of language they use in the original is to misrepresent them; if we allow Penelope to address Melantho as a 'bitch' (translating *κύων*, *Odyssey* 19. 91) our translation will misrepresent this 'model of female dignity and propriety'.⁴⁹ A version of this argument may be found as recently as the 1960s, when Douglas Parker, whose translations are fairly accepting of obscenity, argues that the audience's sense of Lysistrata's social standing would be destroyed (and the incongruous humour of her language made to pay too great a cost) if she were to utter a close English equivalent of the crucial word when she tells the women of Greece they must do without *τὸ πέος* (124, the penis).⁵⁰

Tytler and Parker argue that the identification of outright obscenity with the lower classes means it must be suppressed to prevent a mistaken class identification. F. A. Wright (translating Catullus) appears at first to draw a different conclusion when he argues that the particular role of obscenity in

⁴⁷ I am referring here primarily to translators' association of obscenity with the lower classes of their own times, but we may recall that one of the common defences offered for Aristophanes' use of obscenity was his having to cater to a lower-class audience. Taboo behaviour was not as closely linked to class standing as taboo language; note Lamb's comments (Lamb (1821) i. p. xlii) on Catullus as introduced to unnamed 'pleasures' by his social superiors.

⁴⁸ Tytler (1790) 145–6.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 146.

⁵⁰ Parker (1964) 11.

lower-class speech (as a source of humorous abuse emptied of real sexual significance) should allow us better to understand Catullus' obscenity: 'Obviously when he says to Furius and Aurelius, 'paedicabo ego vos et irrumabo' (I'll bugger you and make you suck me), he does not mean it; any more than an English navy does, when he uses precisely similar terms to his companions: it is merely a form of humor which grave folk do not appreciate.'⁵¹ But this analogy, though it may excuse Catullus, does not lead Wright to adopt the navy's diction in his translation; indeed, his very loose paraphrase of the poem in question, Catullus 16, is about as far as it could be from lower-class colloquialism:

You sorry knaves, who dared to hiss
Because I sang my thousandth kiss,
And treat me as a love sick miss,
I'll show you I'm a man.⁵²

The association of obscenity with the lower-class diction of their own time, then, may lead translators to obscure the presence of such language in classical literature not only because it might be shocking to a middle- or upper-class audience but because it would seem inappropriate to the status of the characters who speak it—and perhaps to the status of the classical text as well. And translators addressing readers of lower social status may also avoid obscenity, not so much because of the fear (reflected in the legal proceedings described above) that such readers are more susceptible to moral corruption as because of the fact that the translator, though emphasizing the similarities between the Roman world and our own, is uncomfortable with this particular similarity (the popular use of obscenity) and wishes to maintain the distance and status of the ancient author, who is, after all, a classic.

SILENCE AND TACT

What follows when a translator, seeking to protect the author from the reader's possible misperception, the reader from the author's obscenity, or perhaps simply the publisher from legal action, determines that the obscene element in a classical text is in some sense or to some degree untranslatable into English—that is, that it cannot be expressed directly in the target language, for this particular audience, at this historical moment? Translators

⁵¹ Wright (1926) 63. Cf. Stuttaford (1912), 219 on Catullus 16: 'These terms must not be taken literally: they were merely vulgar abuse.'

⁵² Wright (1926) 144.

in such circumstances pursue a variety of strategies: they may omit sentences, passages, or whole poems, they may leave these passages in the original language or have recourse to a language other than English, or they may make use of various types of euphemism.

Omission may be covert, especially when it is indistinguishable from selection on some other principle (as in McNaghten's *Story of Catullus*) or masked by a translation that verges on adaptation (as in Wright's version of Catullus 16, cited above). But translators frequently announce their intention in advance, often in wording ('omitted for obvious reasons') that suggests that the need for omission is self-evident and that the very reason for it should probably not be mentioned.⁵³ They may also signal the elided bits by the use of dots (as in the Loeb version of Catullus) or dashes (as in the first Loeb version of Martial) or simply by the tell-tale absence of certain numbered chapters. In the introduction to his bilingual 1908 *Daphnis and Chloe*, Lowe notes that 'some passages have been excised but nothing that affects the plot or construction of the story has been omitted',⁵⁴ The careful reader may note that in Book 3 we skip (in both the Greek and the English) from chapter 12 to a considerably foreshortened chapter 20; what the translator has left out is the initiatory seduction of Daphnis by the experienced Lycaenion. Some translators go a step further; in the preface to his translation of *The Golden Ass*, Butler warns the reader: 'Not a few expurgations have been necessary, and in one case, where the offending passage is one on which the plot actually turns, it has been necessary to rewrite the story to the extent of a few lines of print.'⁵⁵ Working in the tradition of Sir George Head's earlier (1851) rendering of Apuleius, which modifies the narrative so that the ass expresses horror not at the homosexual behaviour of the wandering priests who are his current owners but at their drinking habits, Butler skips over (among other things)

⁵³ The phrase quoted here comes from the introduction to Owen's Juvenal (Owen (1924) p. ix), but similar wording can be found in many other translators. Gaselee cites approvingly Adlington's note on the passage in Apuleius in which the ass has sex with a woman: 'Here I have left out certain lines *propter honestatem*' (Adlington/Gaselee (1915) 511). Is he approving Adlington's reticence about his reasons as well as his practice? Perhaps most striking of all in its reticence is the note in Cornish's introduction to his thoroughly expurgated Loeb Catullus (with its dots, its retention of the Latin at crucial points, and its misrepresentation of Catullus 16 as a 'fragment') in which he tells us that he is not responsible for the translation of some of the poems—listed but not otherwise identified—which have been paraphrased by W. H. D. Rouse (Cornish (1913) p. ix).

⁵⁴ Lowe (1908) p. x. Cf. Evans/Gifford (1901) p. xxxv: 'Some acquaintance with the original will be necessary to discover these lacunae, which do not, in all, amount to half a page.' See also Borges (2004) 96 on Lane's suppression of obscenity in the *Thousand and One Nights*; Borges's essay, originally published in 1935, includes a particular interesting discussion of different translators' handling of obscenity in this text.

⁵⁵ Butler (1910) 3.

the episode in which the ass-narrator has sex with a wealthy woman, and adds a (bracketed) paragraph to explain that the ass's owner planned to have him 'feast in public with a lady by my side'.⁵⁶

DECENT (?) OBSCURITY

Translations may also acknowledge the untranslatable by leaving certain passages in the original Latin, a practice quite common until the middle of the twentieth century.⁵⁷ In the introduction to his Loeb version of Petronius, Heseltine alludes to Gibbon's famous practice in declaring that 'the translator... must leave whole passages in the decent obscurity of Latin'.⁵⁸ And J. M. Mitchell, in spite of his general commitment to conveying Petronius' varied diction and to finding equivalents in different kinds of modern slang for Petronius' colloquialism, nonetheless modifies his original in places and in others follows Heseltine in leaving several passages (those involving the most explicit sexuality) in Latin; he hopes 'the result will be excused on the score of public decency'.⁵⁹

Translators of Greek texts also have recourse to Gibbon's 'obscurity of a learned language'—not, as a rule, by retaining the Greek original, but by rendering it in Latin, presumably as the traditional language of scholarship. Thus, in the first edition of Gaselee's Loeb edition of Achilles Tatius, a discussion of the relative pleasures of sex with women and sex with boys is given in Latin,⁶⁰ and the Loeb library edition of Benjamin Bickley Rogers's translation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* offers in a footnote a literal rendering in Latin of the women's oath at lines 211–36, a passage merely paraphrased in the translation.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Butler (1910) 99. Less often commented on by translators are the many instances in which the gender of an addressee such as Catullus' Juventius is changed to conceal homoeroticism.

⁵⁷ The practice has been almost entirely defunct in recent decades, but it is curious that Peter Whigham's translation of Catullus—perhaps in a kind of gesture at a tradition—leaves two of the most notoriously obscene lines in Catullus, 'Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo' (I'll bugger you and make you suck me, 16. 1) and 'non si demisso se voret ipse capite' (not if with head bent down he ate himself up, 88. 8) in Latin (Whigham (1966) 70, 200).

⁵⁸ Heseltine (1913) p. xvi. See Gibbon (1911, first pub. 1796) 173, 'My English text is chaste, and all licentious passages are left in the obscurity of a learned language.'

⁵⁹ Mitchell (1923) 32. On Heseltine and Mitchell see Roberts (2006).

⁶⁰ Gaselee (1917) 128–32.

⁶¹ Rogers (1924) 25. Even the Latin, is, however, mildly bowdlerized, since the Greek 'ὄστις πρὸς ἐμὲ πρόσεισιν ἐστυκῶς' (*Lysistrata* 215) (whoever approaches me with an erection) becomes 'qui mihi ad amorem paratus appropinquabit' (who approaches me prepared for love).

To leave a text in the original Latin might signal its general or inherent untranslatability. But to translate it from the source language into Latin (or any other language) seems to indicate that the text is untranslatable specifically into the basic target language of the translation, and to substitute an alternative target language which is for some reason not subject to the objections that would otherwise arise.

How are we to understand this use of Latin—which extends well beyond translations from the classical languages?⁶² Gibbon's wording—and Mitchell's comment about public decency—suggest that to some extent Latin, as the language of the educated elite, is conceived of as a private space where English is public. It also seems likely that those who can read Latin (or at least read it well enough to follow these passages) are considered to be either proof against corruption or unlikely to be shocked or both. Recall the passage I cited above, in which the head of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice commented approvingly on the restricted access to texts such as the *Satyricon* in the original Latin, available only to 'scholars and bona fide researchers'.

Occasionally, however, another possibility emerges. According to a *New York Times* editorial on the prosecution of Firebaugh's *Petronius*, 'It used to be assumed by courts which construed the law that persons who could read the classical languages were already corrupt beyond hope of redemption.'⁶³ This comment may be tongue-in-cheek, but it gains some plausibility by the use in a few instances of Italian as an alternative to Latin, since the former would not at this time have qualified as a learned tongue and its use—rather than serving as a guarantee of respectability—might rather have suggested that anyone who could read the language of Boccaccio could handle the obscenity of his Roman predecessors. In his introduction to the first Loeb edition of Martial, the translator (after describing some of Martial's work as 'indescribably foul' but exempting Martial himself from immorality) remarks in a footnote that 'All epigrams possible of translation by the use of dashes or paraphrases have been rendered in English, the wholly impossible ones only in Italian.'⁶⁴ Ker gives no reason for his use of Italian, but he here follows the practice of his predecessor Henry Bohn (1860) and uses the same translations, those of Giuspanio Graglia (1782–91) which freely use such words as 'cunnilingo', and allow 'il c—o' for 'cunnus' where even 'c—t' is evidently 'wholly impossible' in English.

⁶² Talmudic passages may, for example, be rendered in Latin; and see Wolfart (1986) on the use of Latin in the past to translate problematic passages in Cree literature.

⁶³ 'Petronius Now on Trial', *The New York Times*, 21 July 1922: 10.

⁶⁴ Ker (1919) i. 16.

'THAT'D BE THE FRENCH'⁶⁵

The fact that Graglia prefers quasi-technical language ('sodomizare', 'membro', 'masturbatore') to colloquial obscenity may explain why Bohn comments on his skill 'in refining impurities'. Bohn also makes clear that this skill is the reason he has chosen Graglia (1782–91) in preference to the available French translations: 'it would have been equally, if not more convenient to select from these, but that none of them have used the least refinement, indeed, have sometimes rather exceeded their author in his worst properties'.⁶⁶

J. M. Mitchell's attitude to French versions of Petronius is similar; readers, he says, who 'wish for the crudity of the unvarnished original [of the *Satyricon*] can get it in the French translations, which are written for a public somewhat Neronian in matters of taste'.⁶⁷

In fact, translators of texts regarded as obscene regularly cite the approach of the French as a kind of antitype to English reticence—for better or for worse. Another of Petronius' translators, Michael Ryan, approvingly cites a theory that the writer's origins might be found in Gaul, given his resemblance to modern French novelists such as Flaubert and de Maupassant in a number of respects, including the importance in his works of 'the sexual instinct, pervasive, always present, and manifested at the most unexpected times'.⁶⁸ One translator of Aristophanes comments on the author's 'esprit gaulois' and notes that Poyard's prose rendering of Aristophanes 'combines scholarly precision with an easy, racy, vernacular style that seems impossible to any but a French scholar';⁶⁹ another alludes to recent productions of *Lysistrata* as 'a typical sex comedy in the French manner'.⁷⁰ In the preface to his Catullus, Theodore Martin (one of the poet's more censorious translators) describes 'the spirit of the lighter pieces' in Catullus as 'admirably transfused into French verse,' which however fails with 'the more weighty poems'.⁷¹ It is clear that from the English-speaker's point of view French is envisioned as

⁶⁵ Captain Jack Sparrow.

⁶⁶ Bohn (1860) p. iv. I have come across no instance of the translation of ancient obscenity into French in an expurgated text, but see below on the use of French terminology in limited editions. French as a replacement for English may be found (surprisingly, or perhaps tellingly) in a brief passage in a limited edition 1898 translation of a sixteenth-century Italian collection of stories, *The Facetious Nights of Giovanni Francesco Straparola*, Waters (1898) ii. 357–9.

⁶⁷ Mitchell (1923) p. xii.

⁶⁸ Ryan (1905) p. xviii.

⁶⁹ Aristophanes (1912) 19, 21.

⁷⁰ Seldes (1930) p. ix.

⁷¹ Martin (1875) p. xlvi.

the all-too-appropriate target language where obscenity is concerned; too appropriate, indeed, for decent use.⁷²

POLITE EQUIVALENTS

Perhaps the most common means by which translators meet the demands of decency in English is the use of euphemism—here in the sense of broadly acceptable language substituted for obscene or otherwise taboo language.⁷³ Euphemistic translation should not be regarded as falsifying the source text, though it may as a rule be understood (in Lawrence Venuti's terms) as domesticating rather than foreignizing, since it characteristically assimilates the source culture to the norms and constraints of the target culture and eschews what might be subversive elements in the target language.⁷⁴ But the predicament to which euphemistic translation is a response is of course simply a strong version of the translator's usual dilemma: how to render something that can be said in the source language into something that can be said in the target language, where 'can be said' is a matter not only of grammatical and lexical possibility but of the cultural context of the original and of the translation and of the intended audience. In the case of classical texts, as I have suggested above, the motive for euphemism involves the translator's understanding both of his audience's sense of social acceptability ('decency') and of his audience's particular expectations of works of elite or canonical standing.

The euphemistic translations in expurgated editions of ancient authors typically involve moves of three kinds, which may of course (as moves along different axes) be found in combination: generalization, metonymic substitution⁷⁵, and communicative or rhetorical equivalence.

⁷² Note the idiom 'excuse my French', where 'French' actually refers to English obscenities, and the prevalence of French borrowings in the realm of the erotic; see Allen and Burridge (1991) 89. But cf. also Hughes (1991) 1 on the French view of the English as particularly given to swearing ('les Goddems' and 'les fuckoffs').

⁷³ On the general subject of euphemism (looked at from a variety of points of view), see Enright (1985), Allen and Burridge (1991), and De Martino and Sommerstein (1999). Allen and Burridge give the most thoroughgoing treatment, but apply the term somewhat more broadly than I do here. See also Lefevere (1992) 98, 101–2, and Perez Quintero and Toledano Buendia (2001).

⁷⁴ Venuti (1995); see also Crisafulli (1997); Bassnett and France (2006) 52–5.

⁷⁵ Translation by metaphoric substitution is relatively uncommon, perhaps because metaphors are themselves a fruitful source of colloquial obscenity. See Allen and Burridge (1991) 21–5 on the way in which euphemisms may become taboo words themselves.

Euphemism by generalization seems to be particularly common in translations of Martial, where the frequency of obscenity poses a particular challenge to those who aim at complete editions.⁷⁶ So, for Martial's 'cunnum Charinus lingit et tamen pallet' (1. 77. 6, Charinus licks cunt and still is pale) Bohn's version has Charinus indulges in infamous debauchery—and yet he is pale' and the Pott/Wright versified translation has 'And e'en his vices do not make him blush.'⁷⁷ Similarly, where Martial has 'Pedicatur Eros, fellat Linus' (7. 10. 1, Eros gets buggered, Linus sucks), we find 'Eros has one filthy vice, Linus has another',⁷⁸ and 'Eros and Linus are debauched, you say.'⁷⁹

These generalizations both categorize and offer a judgement on the specifics they translate; that is, rather than simply offering a fairly neutral generalization ('Eros engages in passive sexual activity') the translator identifies the acts in question as debauched and disgusting ('Eros has one filthy vice'). But in this context we might say that judgement is a required condition of acceptable translation, since an ostensibly neutral description ('engages in passive sexual activity') would no doubt be problematic both in its greater explicitness and in a neutrality that might suggest acceptance. The generalization thus interprets and comments on the original, representing fairly accurately Martial's tendency to mock those who take a passive sexual role but also suggesting that Martial shares the moral indignation or disgust that has led the translator to efface the specifics.

Sometimes, however, euphemistic generalizations are so vague that they appear to evade any comment on (or clue to) the original. Ker translates Martial 4. 50. 2 'Nemo est, Thai, senex ad irrumandum' (No one, Thais, is an old man where getting sucked is concerned) as 'No one, Thais, is too old for some things,' and Martial 2. 47. 4, 'Quae faciat duo sunt: irrumat aut futuit' (There are two things he does: he gets sucked or he fucks) as 'There are two things he can do and neither is what you offer.'⁸⁰ We find a similar vagueness in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, in the passage in which Lysistrata draws the other women's attention to the absence of any source of sexual satisfaction (107–10):

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μοιχοῦ καταλέλειπται φεψάλυξ.
 ἐξ οὗ γὰρ ἡμᾶς προῦδοσαν Μιλήσιοι,
 οὐκ εἶδον οὐδ' ὄλισβον ὀκτωδάκτυλον,
 ὅς ἦν ἂν ἡμῖν σκυτίνη ἴπικουρία.

Not even a spark of a lover is left,
 And ever since the Milesians betrayed us,
 I haven't seen a dildo eight fingers long

⁷⁶ Sullivan and Boyle (1996) pp. xx–xxxvii.

⁷⁷ Bohn (1860) 64; Pott and Wright (1924) 26.

⁷⁸ Ker (1919) i. 427.

⁷⁹ Pott and Wright (1924) 199.

⁸⁰ Ker (1919) i. 265, 139.

Which might have been a leather source of help.

A number of translators omit the dildo altogether, but Rogers's translation offers a kind of place-holder for the unnamed object:

No husbands now, no sparks, no anything.
For ever since Miletus played us false,
We've had no joy, no solace, none at all.⁸¹

And Hickie is somewhat more helpful as to the role of the unnamed 'thing': 'But not even the spark of a paramour is left; for since the Milesians betrayed us, I have not seen a thing of the kind, which might have consoled us in the absence of our husbands.'⁸² Generalizations of this kind may actually be more suggestive than the apparently more descriptive ones ('Eros and Linus are debauched') noted above. 'No one is too old for some things'—given the addressee's name—seems to presume a sexual sense. And the *Lysistrata* versions, although they appear to generalize to the point of vacuity, might also be read as evoking the unnamed dildo by their use of the word 'thing', which can mean anything at all but also suggests a concrete object, an item—and one whose use is suggested by the context.

Euphemism by metonymic substitution, that is, euphemism in which the translator renders an obscene expression by something else with which it is associated, is also common. When *Lysistrata* tells the women of Greece they must abstain from τὸ πέος (124, the penis), this is variously rendered as 'the joys of Love',⁸³ 'love's intercourse',⁸⁴ 'the marriage-bed',⁸⁵ and 'the male'.⁸⁶ In general, such substitutions (like euphemistic generalization) involve a loss of concreteness; Martial's 'mentula demens' (insane prick) at 3. 76. 3 becomes 'amorous madness'⁸⁷ (or insane desire⁸⁸). But sometimes we find an obscene word replaced by a word that refers to the same entity under a different description; in Ker's version of Martial 1. 73. 4, *fututores* (fuckers) become 'gallants';⁸⁹ and in Way's *Lysistrata*, the dildo becomes a 'widow's comforter'.⁹⁰ (This last so obviously proclaims itself a euphemism as almost to lose that function.)

Any of the forms of euphemism I have mentioned so far might be considered to aim at a kind of functional or rhetorical equivalence, since translators who expurgate generally take it as a given that they are replacing what was acceptable to an ancient audience with what is acceptable to their own

⁸¹ Rogers (1924) 15.

⁸² Hickie (1876) ii. 394.

⁸³ Rogers (1924) 16.

⁸⁴ Way (1934) 9.

⁸⁵ Hickie (1876) ii. 395.

⁸⁶ Aristophanes (1936) 235.

⁸⁷ Ker (1919) i. 213.

⁸⁸ Bohn (1860) 167.

⁸⁹ Ker (1919) i. 77.

⁹⁰ Way (1934) 9.

contemporaries. But in some cases we see a more precise attention to rhetorical or communicative force.⁹¹ When Petronius (in a rare use of an actual obscenity) has a character say ‘frigori laecasin dico’ (I tell the cold to go suck) he is using an expression (*laecasin*) derived from the Greek *λαϊκάζειν*; this verb probably originally described fellatio, but it seems likely that its literal meaning is no longer prominent in its use as a curse.⁹² Bowdlerizing translators may be said to reflect its register and usage in translating it as ‘go and be hanged’ or ‘go to the devil’.⁹³

Similarly, expurgated versions of the opening lines of Catullus 16 (‘Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo, Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi’ (in Peter Green’s recent rendering ‘Up yours both, and sucks to the pair of you, Queen Aurelius, Furius the faggot’) offer translations variously designed to convey either the threat of violence, the tone of hostility, or the stance of the dominant male:

I’ll trounce you, Furius, well, and you,
His peer in vice, Aurelius, too.⁹⁴
I’ll traduce you, accuse you, and abuse you,
Soft Aurelius, e’en as easy Furius.⁹⁵
I will give you proofs of my virility,
Aurelius the debauched and Furius the lascivious.⁹⁶

As the examples above have suggested, euphemisms that work in a variety of ways may also be distinguished by the degree to which they conceal obscenity and the degree to which they suggest it.⁹⁷ By this I mean not so much to distinguish euphemisms that acknowledge the presence of the obscene or erotic (‘filthy vices’, ‘joys of love’) from those that obscure it (‘I’ll trounce you, Furius, well’) as to distinguish the latter from those whose tone or wording somehow hints at the obscene (‘nudge nudge, wink wink’). When Fitts⁹⁸ calls the dildo in *Lysistrata* ‘one of those devices they call Widow’s Delight’, the combined reference to function and mechanism leaves little to the imagination. When Aiken⁹⁹ rewrites Martin’s version of poem 16 so that the opening

⁹¹ On the illocutionary level in the translation of obscenity in ancient literature see Lefevere (1992) ch. 3 on Catullus 32.

⁹² Adams (1982) 132, 134, 215–28; on the meaning of the verb see esp. Shipp (1977) and Jocelyn (1980).

⁹³ See on translations of this passage Roberts (2006) 46–7.

⁹⁴ Martin (1875).

⁹⁵ Ellis (1871) 13.

⁹⁶ Stuttaford (1912) 27.

⁹⁷ See Allen and Burridge (1991) 30–1 on ‘dypthemistic euphemisms’, and ‘euphemistic dysphemisms’, which ‘have locutions that are at odds with their illocutionary point’.

⁹⁸ (1954) 10. ⁹⁹ (1950) 215.

line reads ‘I’ll turn and roast you on a spit’ and the final repetition of that line ‘I’ll impale you yet on something you’ll not soon forget,’ the phallic metaphor seems inescapable. And when Lindsay¹⁰⁰ translates Catullus’ hypothetical extreme of vice—the imagined behaviour of the incestuous Gellius, who could do no worse ‘non si demisso se voret ipse capite’ (not if with head bent down he ate himself up, 88. 8)—with the words

There’s only one thing worse: I view it comically,
because it’s quite impossible anatomically.

he virtually invites his reader to figure out what it is he’s not describing.¹⁰¹ As we could in any case deduce from their body of work as a whole, Fitts and Lindsay are clearly bowdlerizers by necessity, not by inclination. Aiken is a little more surprising in this company, but we might recall his admiration for the airman’s eloquent obscenity.

DEFENDING THE SURREPTITIOUS CLASSIC: AS CLASSIC, AS SURREPTITIOUS

If we turn now to those translators who evade the necessity of bowdlerization by publishing in limited editions, we find that some of them engage in the same kinds of defence common in expurgated versions. In a bravura performance, the anonymous translator of a privately published Aristophanes refers in the introduction to the playwright’s ‘rollicking, reckless, uproarious fun’ and to his ‘serious intention’; admits that he would have been just as diverting ‘had he respected the dictates of common decency’; notes that ‘the Ancients never understood modesty quite in the same way as our refined modern civilization does’; and offers as extenuating circumstances ‘the times in which he lived, the origin itself of the Greek Comedy, and the constitution of the audience’.¹⁰² Even when translators dispense with any direct defence of the author’s use of obscenity, they may defend the status of the work as a classic by some other means, most often by the inclusion of scholarly material of some kind. The translation of Petronius’ *Satyricon* first ascribed by Charles Carrington to Oscar Wilde (under his pen-name, Sebastian Melmoth) includes an introduction largely pieced together from the work of various

¹⁰⁰ (1948) 72.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Lindsay’s transparent ‘Nine hugs without a stop’ (ibid. 74) for ‘novem continuas fututiones’ (‘nine whole uninterrupted fuckfests’; Green (2005) 78) in Catullus 32. 8; on translations of this poem see Lefevere (1992) ch. 3.

¹⁰² Aristophanes (1912) 10, 17.

scholars.¹⁰³ Similarly, the unidentified translators of the *Index Expurgatorius of Martial* (Sala, Sellon, et al. 1867), which presents the poems no one else would publish, include in their notes a few examples of textual criticism and a number of citations of previous scholars—largely, however, on the subject of Roman sexual practices.

The predominantly sexual subject matter of the notes in the *Index Expurgatorius* and in similar editions (such as Firebaugh's *Petronius*)¹⁰⁴ suggests that the translator who includes such scholarly or pseudo-scholarly apparatus is actually playing a double game, defending the text's reputation both as a classic (suitable for scholarly consideration) and as a surreptitious classic or classic of the obscene. Indeed, such translators (and presumably their publishers) sometimes seem to be bent on ensuring that their readers will feel they are getting their money's worth from texts that often enough appear on publishers' lists in the company of erotica but might seem suspiciously educational. Both of Jack Lindsay's very different versions of Catullus seek to improve on the standard biographical reading of the works by offering a quasi-psychoanalytic analysis. But whereas the expurgated translation offers a brief and inoffensive version, relegated to an appendix 'where it may be ignored by those who cannot accept this kind of inquiry',¹⁰⁵ the limited edition version freely engages in discussion of Catullus's 'orgasmic' emotions, the role of the 'lovelad' in Roman life, and Clodia as exemplar of a 'splendidly whoring' lady in whom 'the sexual instincts awake to a divine irresponsibility'.¹⁰⁶ The *Index Expurgatorius* regularly compares ancient sexual practices to modern, offering, for example, a detailed account of the particular conventions of a site of homosexual cruising.¹⁰⁷ And unexpurgated translations are frequently accompanied by illustrations that range from the mildly erotic or salacious (e.g. Norman Lindsay's for the *Satyricon*) to the frankly obscene (e.g. Aubrey Beardsley's for *Lysistrata*).¹⁰⁸ It should be noted, however, that the embrace of a text specifically as a classic of the obscene doesn't necessarily entail the abandonment of any posture of morality. Even those translators who appear most fully to embrace an author's obscenity and who translate it into the most taboo of contemporary terms may

¹⁰³ 'Wilde' (1902). Carrington, well known as a publisher of pornography, included a number of classical texts in his list. This translation was certainly not by Wilde; on the hoax and the likely authorship of this version (which has also been falsely attributed to Ernest Dowson), see Boroughs (1995); on some aspects of the translation, see Roberts (2006).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Burton and Smithers (1894).

¹⁰⁵ Lindsay (1948) 100.

¹⁰⁶ Lindsay (1929). Lindsay's 1929 Catullus is unpaginated, but the passages cited appear on pp. 19, 47, and 13 of the appendix.

¹⁰⁷ Sala, Sellon et al. (1867) 78.

¹⁰⁸ Firebaugh (1922); Smith (1973, first pub. 1896). See Jenkins (2005) on an illustrated 1920s edition of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*.

suddenly demonstrate (or perhaps feign) a limit to their tolerance, as when the authors of the *Index Expurgatorius* (though cheerfully translating and explicating a variety of sexual practices) turn censorious over ‘the pernicious habit of masturbating’.¹⁰⁹

PROTECTING THE READER, PROTECTING THE CLASSIC

Since the restricted readership of limited editions at least theoretically excludes those who might need protection because of their youth or their social status, their translators rarely express concern about these other readers—with a few notable exceptions. In the preface to his translation of Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, Francis Byrne attacks expurgation, while ostensibly accepting the practice of keeping taboo texts altogether from the young:

Books which describe life as it really is should be kept altogether from any young persons, whom it may be deemed desirable to keep in ignorance of the part played by sexual desire in the general scheme of life. There is an abundance of other literature for them to form their taste upon. Let them study such poets and writers of fancy as are suited to the early stages of life. And let them have no *Gil Blas*, no *Tom Jones*, no *Tristram Shandy*, no *Golden Ass*, and of course, no *Old Testament*.

But imagine the folly of handing these books to the unwise in such truncated and mutilated form that their motive is obscured and their language pointless, at the same time representing them as the productions of genius! What is the result of such commendation to the young mind? A feeling of utter bewilderment in the first place, and then, as knowledge arrives, a sense of indignation at the unworthy trick which has been played at their expense by those who are older, and should have been wiser, than themselves.¹¹⁰

The ironies of Byrne’s first paragraph (‘no *Old Testament*’) give way to indignation in his second, an indignation not only on behalf of the deceived and bewildered reader, but also on behalf of the mutilated text. Indeed, just as with bowdlerizing translators of the classics, concern for the reader is here closely linked to a concern that the classic text be represented to the reader in

¹⁰⁹ Sala, Sellon et al. (1867) 78. On concerns about masturbation and about obscenity as a cause of masturbation see Marcus (1964) 19–23; Pease (2000) 100; T. Lewis (2003) 146.

¹¹⁰ Byrne (1905) pp. xxxviii–xxxix. In spite of Byrne’s protestations, the only readily available version of his translation leaves several passages in untranslated Latin; I believe that an earlier unexpurgated edition existed, and may have appeared on Charles Carrington’s list, but have so far been unable to find it. (Unexpurgated editions were sometimes reissued in revised form for the general public: such versions exist for both Firebaugh’s Petronius and the Athenian Society’s Aristophanes; see Firebaugh 1927; Aristophanes 1936.)

such a way as to maintain its status as a respected work of literature. But where the bowdlerizing translator insists that only through expurgation can the text's true nature and true worth be conveyed to the general reader, translators such as Byrne see expurgation as destructive of the fundamental elements that make the text 'a production of genius'.

Byrne's choice of language here ('truncated and mutilated') finds echoes in other translators, some of whom reject such mutilation by expurgation specifically as a mode of castration. The anonymous translator of the version of Aristophanes privately printed for the Athenian Society (1912) declares that 'no faithful translator will emasculate his author by expurgation' (19), and Leonard Smithers, who edited Richard Burton's posthumous Catullus and wrote the prose versions and notes that accompany Burton's verse translations, says that he has 'aimed at producing a readable translation, and yet as literal a version (castrating no passages) as the dissimilarity in idiom of the two languages, Latin and English, permit.'¹¹¹ And in spite of the fact that James Cranstoun's own translation is, although complete, thoroughly euphemistic, he makes use of the same image in objecting to those who 'excise' the obscene poems of Catullus: 'His expressions, it is true, are often intensely sensuous, sometimes even grossly licentious, but to obliterate these and to clothe him in the garb of purity would be to misrepresent him entirely. He would be Atys, not Catullus.'¹¹² Cranstoun sees those who refuse to translate the obscene poems as rendering Catullus (like the Attis of his own poem 63) a eunuch. The obscenity that bowdlerizing translators often regard as threatening our understanding of the true virtues of the classic text may thus for those who reject expurgation be a constitutive element of the text's power, conceived of as essentially virile. Cranstoun's other image, that of the 'garb of purity', suggests that this virility must be neither excised nor obscured; the metaphor of clothing also occurs in Burton's contrast between the Catullus of other translators, who dress 'the toga'd citizen' in 'the costume of today', and his own presentation, which apparently strips away even the toga: 'As discovery is mostly my mania, I have hit upon a bastard-urging to indulge it, by a presenting to the public of certain classics in the nude Roman poetry, like the Arab, and of the same date...'¹¹³

¹¹¹ Burton and Smithers (1894) pp. xv–xvi.

¹¹² Cranstoun (1867) p. vi.

¹¹³ Burton and Smithers (1894) p. ix. On Cranstoun and Burton, see Gaisser (2001) pp. xxxvii–xxxviii.

'CLASSICS IN THE NUDE'¹¹⁴

The limited-edition translators, like those who expurgate, are centrally concerned with the defence or protection of the obscene text as a classic—that is, as deserving of its elite standing and its historical place in the literary canon. But this second set of translators may be divided into three groups: those who defend the classic in essentially the same way as the bowdlerizers, on the grounds that the obscenity is insignificant, good-hearted, ethically motivated, or merely conventional; those who by implication defend the classic as a surreptitious or alternative classic, suggesting that the obscenity is of central interest and analogous to what may be found in contemporary pornography and erotica; and those who defend the classic (and seek to protect it specifically from expurgation) on the grounds that the obscenity is a critical element of the text's power, sometimes constructed as the text's virility.

If we look at the actual practice of the translators who publish in limited editions and are thus relatively unaffected by legal constraints we find a range and variety of diction analogous to the range and variety of defences outlined above. This variety is partly a function of the fact (noted at the outset of this chapter) that there is a dearth of unmarked English terms for the sexual, anatomical, or excremental; this lack forces the translator to choose between quite different registers. But the particular choice of register presumably reflects not only translators' responses to the obscenity in their author (mild distaste, relish, acceptance) and their sense of the tastes of the 'select clientele' to which the limited edition is addressed but also their attitude towards the place of the obscene in the classic text.

We may compare, for example, the *Index Expurgatorius of Martial*¹¹⁵—offering all the poems no one else had translated—with the translation by Mitchell S. Buck, which claims to be the first complete translation of Martial's work.¹¹⁶ The *Index* freely uses English colloquial obscenity (prick-sucking, cunt, pego, etc.), and though it contains no prefatory material the copious notes make clear the expected interests of its audience, explaining sexual practices in detail and sometimes offering contemporary parallels.¹¹⁷ Buck, in contrast, tries where possible to use archaisms ('coynte' for 'cunnus' and

¹¹⁴ Burton and Smithers (1894) p. ix.

¹¹⁵ Sala, Sellon et al. (1867).

¹¹⁶ Buck (1921). On the *Index*, see Sullivan (1991) 305; Sullivan and Boyle (1996) p. xxxi.

¹¹⁷ Sala, Sellon et al. (1867) 7–8. This passage is a particularly interesting one from the point of view of class associations. The editors explicate an obscene gesture alluded to by Martial, comment that 'the same coarse jest is still in use among the lower orders', and proceed to describe the use of this gesture by 'gentlemen given to sodomitical practices'.

'swive' for 'futuō') or Latinisms, sometimes extremely rare ones ('pedicate' and 'irrumate' as well as 'fellate'). The two thus translate Martial 2. 47 (for example) very differently: the *Index* has 'He does two things, he fucks a mouth or a cunt,' and Buck has 'there are two things he can do: irrumate or swive'. We find diction similar to Buck's in Leonard Smithers's prose versions in the Burton/Smithers *Catullus* (1894).¹¹⁸ Another occasional alternative to colloquialism, archaism, and technical or learned diction is—not surprisingly—the use of words derived from the French: 'gamahuche' (fellate) for 'fellare',¹¹⁹ 'godemiche' (dildo) for ὄλισβος,¹²⁰ and bardache (catamite) for cinaedus.¹²¹

None of these modes of translation is euphemistic (in the sense in which I am using the expression), since all aim at direct description of an unmentionable reality, and all use language that was currently unacceptable in general social use and in publications for a general readership. But the use of slang evokes a different register of discourse from the use of learned terms (whether Latinate or archaic English), and presumably also a different social and educational milieu; nor are all types of slang suggestive of the same class standing. The use of expressions such as 'irrumate' and 'coynte' (and perhaps 'godemiche') is thus arguably a means of somehow maintaining the elite standing of the classical author while still giving the appearance of openness and completeness, while the use of colloquial or vulgar terminology—avoided by bowdlerizing translators with a view to preserving the classic as a classic—more closely identifies the text as a classic of the obscene.

PRESERVING THE SURREPTITIOUS CLASSIC

All translators in the period we have been considering are working in the context of shared social assumptions that draw a sharp distinction, where the reception of obscenity is concerned, between public and private and among different audiences. It would be easy to see those who expurgate and those who don't as having two quite distinct responses to these contexts, represented at their extremes by the swashbuckling ('discovery is mostly my mania')¹²² and the wistful ('if I may speak out all my dreams').¹²³ But the

¹¹⁸ Burton's own translation might have had a closer resemblance to those of the *Index* had not his wife famously rid it of all obscenities, leaving dots in their place.

¹¹⁹ Sala, Sellon et al. (1867).

¹²⁰ Aristophanes (1912).

¹²¹ Burton and Smithers (1894).

¹²² Burton (1894) p. ix. ¹²³ McNaghten (1899) p. vii.

choices made by both types of translator represent a considerable range of approaches and practices and reflect a shared commitment to the special standing of the text as a classic—of one sort or another.

From the second half of the twentieth century on, with gradual changes in social attitudes towards the obscene (and what constitutes the obscene), with the near-disappearance of legal constraints, and with the increased openness of even elite media and elite literary genres to previously taboo subject matter and language, translators have been increasingly willing to accommodate or even welcome the presence of obscenity in ancient texts. The process has been a gradual one, and old defences and practices have lingered. But the changes in recent decades go beyond a near-abandonment of expurgation and euphemism. Here I will just note two shifts that seem to me particularly significant. As I have noted, translators in the earlier period often suggest that obscenity was simply accepted in antiquity and not regarded as particularly shocking, thus implying that their authors are not really obscene at all. Some recent translators persist in this defence, or engage in a new version of it that assimilates ancient openness to the relative openness of our own day. But others resist such a move, reinscribing the obscene in antiquity; Stephen Halliwell, for example, objects (in the preface to his Aristophanes) to the view that ‘Athens was a “liberated” society’ rather than a society in which comedy expressed ‘an extreme but temporary escape from the norms of shame and inhibition’.¹²⁴ Conversely, where nineteenth- and early twentieth-century translators (especially those who expurgate) by and large suggest that they and their contemporaries will enjoy these texts not so much because of as in spite of their obscenity, translators at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first freely admit their enjoyment not just of the classic but of the obscene. Sarah Ruden describes herself as having been (in college) ‘crazy about Petronius—and not only because of the inherent interest of sex’, and Peter Green says of Catullus’s obscenity (which ‘shocked people like Cicero, and was meant to’), ‘I rather enjoy it, and (I hope) in the same casual way that it was thrown off.’¹²⁵

We might read these two shifts as pointing to a kind of reversal: our predecessors tended to believe that the category of the obscene (as forbidden discourse) existed for them in a manner and to a degree that wasn’t true of the ancients, whereas we see obscenity as a genuine if diverse phenomenon of

¹²⁴ Halliwell (1997) pp. lxiv, xix. Cf. Hadas (1962) 4 and Henderson (1998) 28, and see also Halliwell (2004) 135–42; Sullivan (1972) 156 warns translators against being seduced by a ‘feeling of modernity’ in Petronius engendered partly by his ‘morbid sexuality’. On distinctive features of the Greek and Roman concepts of obscenity, see Henderson (1991) and Richlin (1992a).

¹²⁵ Ruden (2000) p. viii; Green (2005) 23. We might also note that translators are now more free to discuss in detail the issues involved in translating obscenity; see e.g. Green (1987) 105–9.

ancient culture and are ourselves to some extent losing the category of the obscene (again, as forbidden discourse).

In the light of the shifts I have noted the classic as such no longer seems in any great need of defence against charges of obscenity. But what becomes of the obscene or surreptitious classic when texts need no longer apologize for what they express nor readers for how they respond? It is perhaps partly as a reaction to the diminishing effect of the obscene that late twentieth-century translators sometimes engage in the reverse of euphemism.¹²⁶ The three most recent translations of Petronius all on occasion introduce obscene or scatological language lacking in the original,¹²⁷ and instances of the same phenomenon may be found in translations of Aristophanes and Catullus: Lysistrata's call for the women of Greece to abstain from the penis (124, τὸ πέος) becomes in Henderson's (1997) version, 'we've got to swear off fucking' (98), and Catullus's fantasy of Gellius's gymnastic sexual practice, an obscene image described in the original without specifically obscene diction, becomes in Sesar's version 'even if he bends over and fucks himself in the face'.¹²⁸

These choices can easily be justified by the same sort of argument with which bowdlerizing translators justified their choices: contemporary idiom differs from ancient idiom, contemporary audiences respond differently from ancient audiences, and in this particular case an English obscenity has the desired impact. But we can also see the addition of obscenity, carried to its extreme in the occasional full-scale rewriting of an ancient text as modern pornography (see Paul Gillette's *The Satyricon: Memoirs of a Lusty Roman*),¹²⁹ as an effort to recapture the now endangered impact of the surreptitious classic.

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¹²⁶ See Sullivan (1987) 188; Lefevere (1992) 98; Gaisser (2001) pp. xxxviii–xxxix; Scharffenberger (2002); Harvey (2004) 409; Venuti (2004); Roberts (2006) 48–52, 55; on an earlier example of this see Jenkins (2005).

¹²⁷ Walsh (1996); Branham and Kinney (1997); Ruden (2000).

¹²⁸ Catullus 88. 8, Sesar (1974).

¹²⁹ Gillette (1965); cf. also the version of *Lysistrata* that appeared in the journal *Eros* (1962) 1. I am grateful to the editors, to Julia Gaisser, and to Aryeh Kosman for helpful comments and suggestions.

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III

Contesting the Classic: The Politics of Translation Practice

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Navigating the Realms of Gold: Translation as Access Route to the Classics

Edith Hall

ANCESTORS

Even after several decades of radical change, Classics as a subject-area and a constituent of the curriculum still stands in urgent need of redefining its role now that so many courses are taught primarily, or indeed exclusively, through the medium of modern-language translations.¹ But even if we acknowledge the prevalence of teaching in translation at undergraduate level,² we are still in danger of understating the importance of the provision of translations into modern languages as a formative element in the creation of the contemporary curriculum: ancient authors who can be accessed in a reliable and above all inexpensive translation are far more likely to be selected for inclusion on the syllabus than those who can't. The very shape of the education offered by classicists is increasingly dictated not by the availability of editions of the original texts (the most important criterion until a few years ago), but by the availability of a suitable translation in a cheap mass-market edition. Yet by a strange paradox, whatever appears on formal syllabuses, in the third millennium many people's first contact with ancient texts is via much older translations, which are out of copyright and therefore can be made available freely online.

Readers of the ancient world in translation need to investigate, identify, historically contextualize, and celebrate their own ancestors in order to realize

¹ Early twentieth-century experiments with teaching classics in translation even within Classics departments have recently been documented as occurring at the University of Birmingham as well as in Canada by Todd (2000). The whole of the current chapter is also much indebted to the clear and timely exposition of many of the issues it addresses in Hardwick (2000a).

² There is a crucial distinction to be drawn here: in my view *postgraduate* research in Classics and Ancient History will always require knowledge of the original language in which the major texts under scrutiny were composed.

that they belong to a time-honoured, fascinating, and often heroic tradition that, however, needs to be handled with care. People have been reading the Greeks and Romans in their own languages since the invention of the printing press, often with pleasure, passion, and a sense of commitment to personal or social change. And research into the *history* of the important role played by modern-language translations in the study of the ancient world has been facilitated by the more systematic study of reading culture which has developed amongst social historians over the last three decades. The contribution of such influential organizations as (in Britain) the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for example, has begun to be documented and appreciated.³ The impact of canonical works dependent on (rather than translated from) classical authors is appreciated above all in France, where many people's reading knowledge of the classics was for centuries derived mainly from Fénelon's *Télémaque* and the plays of Racine and Corneille; works by all three of these authors featured amongst the thirty most cited titles in a French Ministry of Education questionnaire on rural reading filled in by prefects in 1866 (*Télémaque* even made twelfth place).⁴ Other scholars have noted the role played by *illustrated* texts in inviting illiterate or semi-literate people to take an interest in the classics.⁵ An early eighteenth-century French farm-boy from Lorraine, by name of Valentin Jamerey-Duval, was illiterate until he came across an illustrated edition of *Aesop's Fables*. So drawn was he to the visual images that he asked some of his fellow-shepherds to explain the stories, and subsequently to teach him to read the book. As a result he developed an insatiable appetite for reading, and became a librarian to the Duke of Lorraine.⁶

More attention has also been paid to books designed for widely dispersed and indeed working-class readers which offered instructive 'digests' of ancient classics, such as the excerpts from Aristotle, Polybius, and Cicero included in *The Political Experience of the Ancient: in its Bearing upon Modern Times*, published by the educationalist Seymour Tremenheere in 1852.⁷ The cultural importance at all levels of society of *Aesop's Fables*, historically one of the most widely read texts after the Bible, has begun to be acknowledged.⁸ In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ulster, the bags of books touted round

³ See e.g. Webb (1971) 66–7; Vincent (1989) 85, 110–11, 192.

⁴ Lyons (2001) 164–5; see also the description of the reading matter enjoyed by carpenters on p. 60.

⁵ Richter (1987) 20–2.

⁶ Lyons (2001) 49.

⁷ See Webb (1971) 97. Tremenheere omitted Plato on the ground that the ideas in the *Republic* might foment socialist agitation.

⁸ See e.g. Vincent (1989) 89.

even the humblest of cottages by chapmen, or itinerant booksellers, certainly included Aesop's *Fables* but also—more surprisingly—a version of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*.⁹ Other reading enjoyed by the 'common man' in Northern Ireland included a version of Musaeus' poem *Hero and Leander*, a history of Troy descended from the *Recuyell of the histories of Troye* printed by Caxton, and (for reasons of theology as much as a desire for classical learning) Josephus' *History of the Jewish War*.¹⁰ A study of family libraries in rural New England reveals the small but persistent presence of translations of Virgil, of Pope's translation of the Homeric epics, of Horace, and (as in Northern Ireland) of Josephus. These almost certainly commanded the attention of women as well as men: the 'Female Department' of the academy at Chester, New England, which opened in the late 1820s, offered a challenging syllabus that included instruction not only in ancient history but also in Latin and Greek.¹¹

The history of *literary* translation has of course been infinitely better served than other types. The term 'literary translation' seems to mean a version, usually of ancient poetry rather than prose, produced with the intention of creating a text that is itself aesthetically valuable (or at least without obvious aesthetic demerit). The study of the literary translation of Greek and Latin poets into English was facilitated by the anthology edited by Poole and Maule (1995), a model of good sense and judgement. And the publication in 2005 and 2006 of two of the intended five volumes of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* (more precisely, of the two volumes covering the period from the Restoration until 1900) has made it possible as never previously for the scholarly community to focus its attention on the processes by which some ancient Greek and Roman authors (along with French, Italian, German, and Spanish ones) first became able to communicate with English-speakers in their own English tongue. The ideas about the history of translation from the ancient Mediterranean classics underlying the current chapter were in gestation long before I became aware of the ongoing work of the editors of these volumes—Peter France, Stuart Gillespie, and their colleagues. But several of the issues explored below do not relate to 'literary' translation at all, and some of the others can perhaps still usefully be emphasized once again, in the belief that future research—at least where English-language translation is concerned—has now been made considerably easier by the availability of the materials and insights assembled by these scholars.

In the case of a few ancient authors perceived to be central to the canon—usually poets rather than prose writers—there have, of course, been concentrated

⁹ J. Adams (1987), 50, 103. The Ovid volume was entitled *Ars Amandi; or, Ovid's Art of Love*, and was printed in Belfast in 1777 by James Magee.

¹⁰ J. Adams (1987) 58–9, 85, 183, 185.

¹¹ Gilmore (1989) 64–7.

studies of historically and aesthetically significant individual translations. A few discrete topics within the history of literary translation have been studied in depth and often. In departments that study Literature in English all over the world it has been translation of Homer that has attracted by far the most attention, as scholars have followed in the footsteps of Joseph Spence's essay on Pope's *Odyssey* (1726–7), and the famous controversy between Matthew Arnold and F. W. Newman.¹² Notable examples of publications in this area include both histories of the translation of Homer,¹³ and fascinating studies of the impact of individual versions, such as Chapman's Homer (1612) and Alexander Pope's *Iliad* (1715) and *Odyssey* (1725).¹⁴ It is a shame that the excellent series published from the mid-1990s onwards by Penguin under the general editorship of Christopher Ricks, *Poets in Translation*, only covered one Greek poet (Homer) and a handful of Roman ones (Horace, Martial, Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Catullus), before being prematurely cancelled.¹⁵ But that series was only ever intended to concern itself with poets—and 'great' poets at that, who had historically attracted extremely ambitious translators, themselves almost exclusively motivated by aesthetic (and financial) considerations.

OBSTACLES

In 1748 the Earl of Chesterfield wrote to his son, 'Classical knowledge, that is, Greek and Latin, is absolutely necessary for everybody... the word *illiterate*, in its common acceptance, means a man who is ignorant of these two languages.'¹⁶ In a series of breathtaking acts of rhetorical exclusion, classical knowledge is here limited to linguistic knowledge, education to men, and literacy to reading competence in Greek and Latin. These distinctions help to explain the absence of excitement amongst classical scholars around the history of modern-language translation, at least beyond the treatment of canonical ancient poets by equally canonical post-Renaissance authors. It

¹² Both men's essays are usefully collected in e.g. Arnold (1905).

¹³ See e.g. Burns (2002) and especially Young (2003).

¹⁴ On Chapman see e.g. deForrest Lord (1956); Sowerby (1992); on Pope see e.g. Williams (1992).

¹⁵ Virgil: Gransden (1996); Horace: Carne-Ross and Haynes (1996); Martial: Sullivan and Boyle (1996); Ovid: Martin (1998); Seneca: Share (1998); Catullus: Gaisser (2001); Homer: Steiner (1996). Fiona Macintosh and I are preparing a volume with a similar format, entitled *Greek Tragedy in English*, to be published in due course by Blackwell.

¹⁶ See Stanhope (1932) iii. 1155 (letter of 27 May), and the fascinating discussion of eighteenth-century reading of the classics in P. Wilson (1982).

can partly be explained by the longstanding status of the classics as the exclusive property of an educated elite, and knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages as passport to an intellectual club that (although arguably international) was socially narrow. During the nineteenth century, as Stray, Majeed, and recently Vasunia have demonstrated, training in Greek and Latin, at least in Britain, became identified with the preparation of young British males for administering the British empire.¹⁷ Reading authors who wrote in these languages in a modern-language translation was regarded with horror, and the practice routinely denigrated. It may be now well over a century since Gilbert Murray bravely stated in his inaugural lecture at the University of Glasgow in 1889 that ‘Greece and not Greek is the real object of our study’.¹⁸ Yet in Canada in the 1920s, ‘the mere thought of ancient literature in translation would have been as repellent as . . . allowing women to smoke in public—wearing trousers’.¹⁹

Radicalized working-class readers had by the twentieth century long been encouraged by their union leaders and middle-class philanthropists to use translations in order to acquire some knowledge of the ancient classics and thus defend themselves against the nefarious educated classes who exploited them.²⁰ The politicization—indeed, blindingly obvious class identification—of the distinction between the different access routes to the classics produced a pronounced prejudice amongst most establishment scholars against being discovered studying the ancient authors even with the *aid* of a translation. This prejudice still blighted the lives of undergraduates reading *Literae Humaniores* at Oxford as late as the 1980s. I know this personally from the sharp response I received from a tutor when I asked where I might find help with comprehending the papyrus texts of Greek lyric poets placed before me in photocopy, and above all from the humiliating experience of being asked to leave a lecture on Sophocles for daring to take in a paperback translation (in addition to my Greek text, I still find myself hastening to add, not instead of it). The ritual denigration of the use of translation is in turn related to the considerable number of samizdat ‘cribs’ published in the nineteenth century in order to help struggling youths stagger their way through the horrors of, for example, Aeschylean choral lyric;²¹ parasitical on this presumably lucrative

¹⁷ See Stray (1997); Majeed (1999); Larson (1999); Vasunia (2005).

¹⁸ Murray (1889), and D. Wilson (1987) 43–4.

¹⁹ The words of Malcolm Francis McGregor, Head of Classics at the University of British Columbia (1954–75), recalling his undergraduate days, as quoted as the epigraph to Todd (2001).

²⁰ See Rose (2001) 26.

²¹ Postgate (1922) 18 n. 1, cites the definition of ‘crib’ offered by the *New English Dictionary* (unspecified date) to which he had access: ‘A translation of a classic or other work in a foreign language for the illegitimate use of students.’ On the identity of the translators who produced the cribs, see further Foster (1966) pp. xxi–xxii.

market in cribs was another one, equally interesting, in humorous and irreverent parodies and burlesques of the worthy ancient texts.²²

Yet the argument from social exclusion does not fully explain why the history of translation should be missing from classics: other factors have been equally important. One has been the fear of the pagan in a Christian world; witness the defensive tone adopted by George Adams in the Preface to his English prose translation of all seven of Sophocles' tragedies in 1729 (the first occasion on which *Trachiniae*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and, astonishingly, *Antigone* had ever appeared in the English tongue): Adams spends a considerable amount of ink refuting the charge that tragedy as a medium 'is only suited to a State of Heathenism'.²³ Another, related (but probably more powerful) reason has been fear of these ancient pagan texts' portrayals of corrupting coarseness or immorality. Even the title page of the early English version of Plautus' *Menaechmi* by William Warner reassured the potential purchaser that this *Pleasant and fine Conceited Comœdie, taken out of the most excellent wittie poet Plautus*, had been *Chosen purposely from out the rest, as least harmefull*. . .²⁴ Straightforward concerns about obscenity dictated the decision about which plays to translate and which merely to summarize in the English version of Father Brumoy's influential *Le Théâtre des grecs* (1730), translated into English by Charlotte Lennox and others in 1759. This work included the first translation of Aristophanes' *Frogs* into English,²⁵ but the obscenity of *Lysistrata* dictated that it was delivered up to the world only in terse summary, accompanied by dark comments warning the reader against its licentious horrors.²⁶

These topics could benefit from far more rigorous examination than they have hitherto enjoyed. For one thing is absolutely certain: the impact of the turning of the ancient Greeks and Romans into living, spoken tongues has had an impact on European culture since the Renaissance at least comparable with that of mother-tongue access to the Bible. Yet the history of the translation of the Greek and Latin classics into English enjoys no equivalent of the veritable industry attaching to the activities of John Wyclif and William Tyndale.²⁷ It is also important to stress that, like the history of the translation of the Bible, the phenomenon of the arrival of classical authors in modern

²² See further E. Hall (1999) 360–1.

²³ Adams (1729) i. 'Preface'.

²⁴ Warner (1595).

²⁵ Henry Fielding had, however, offered a surprisingly close adaptation of *Frogs* in a play-within-a-play in *The Author's Farce*, a comedy produced in 1730. See Fielding (1903) and E. Hall (2007).

²⁶ Brumoy (1759), iii. esp. 358, with the discussion of E. Hall (2007).

²⁷ See, amongst many other studies, Bruce (1961).

languages needs appreciating in its full diachronic depth. A late eighteenth-century translation of Aeschylus into English (see below) may seem an unremarkable notion, until its existence is placed in the context of a translation history in which Aeschylus had *never* been Englished before. On the other hand, the dearth of new translations of many ancient prose writers appearing in the twentieth or even the nineteenth centuries can seem even more surprising when it is discovered that they had been available in the English language by the end of the sixteenth century: Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* by 1532, the now neglected Herodian by 1550, Epictetus by 1567, Polybius by 1568, Demosthenes' *Olynthiacs* by 1570, Aelian by 1576, half of Appian by 1578, and the first two books of Herodotus by 1584.²⁸ This is without even to mention the early translations of Plutarch's *Lives* that were so important to the Renaissance theatre, and which in the case of the life of Julius Caesar reached a far wider reading public, through the conduit of Shakespeare's play, than Plutarch ever could.²⁹ Nor do the examples listed above take into account the ancient novels. Some of these, especially the minor Greek 'romances', thereafter suffered abject neglect until the late twentieth-century revision of the classical canon at last placed the ancient novel high up on the research and teaching agenda.³⁰

Translation history of the Greek and Latin classics is certainly demanding. The near impossibility of studying one period of translation into a modern language in isolation from any other was perhaps first fully appreciated by one of the few scholars to have become excited by this subject-matter previously, an American professor of English named Finley Foster. Foster records that after beginning the research for a book on translations of ancient Greek authors into English that had appeared between 1800 and 1830, it 'soon became evident, however, that there were only two possible termini for such a study: the establishment of Caxton's printing press in London in 1476 and the present year'.³¹ It could equally well be argued that no such history can be written without including *all* the major European languages, since patterns of translation show just how closely communities of translators in Italy, France, Britain, and Germany scrutinized what the others were doing. For reasons to do simply with my own previous research, most of the examples below follow

²⁸ For further details see Foster (1966).

²⁹ For Shakespeare's use of the translation by North (1579) of the French translation by Amyot (1559), see Brower (1971). The widespread presence of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* on the reading lists of working-class and autodidactic Britons is documented in Rose (2001) e.g. 94, 123; on the impact of performances of the play see *ibid.* 33 and 401.

³⁰ See the collection of excellent translations by several hands of the Greek novels in Reardon (1989).

³¹ Foster (1966) p. vii.

Foster in being drawn from the history of translation into the English language; moreover, the majority are from Greek authors rather than Latin, many are connected with drama, and the selection procedure has been unashamedly subjective and favouritist. But this reflects solely on my ignorance rather than on the relative importance of the translation history of all other genres into all other languages.

PIONEERS

Contemplating the history of translation offers hope that the classics curriculum can be constantly refreshed, as students discover that they are able to access fascinating documents of the ancient mindset that go far beyond the canonical poets, just as people who could not read Latin or Greek enjoyed such access hundreds of years ago. Oppian's useful *Halieutica*, a dissertation on the art of fishing, was translated into English in 1722, considerably before Floyer Sydenham and Thomas Taylor first Anglicized most of Plato.³² More British people seem to have wanted help with catching fish than with ontological or epistemological conundrums. Extended excerpts and paraphrases from the ancient treatises and polemics by Lucian, Choricus, and Libanius illustrative of pantomime (i.e. serious, balletic realization of the myths associated with tragedy) began to appear in handbooks on the history of dance at the precise moment when they were needed: the invention of ballet as an elevated, independent art-form at the turn of the eighteenth century.³³

Or take Artemidorus of Daldis' treatise *On the Interpretation of Dreams*, to which attention was influentially drawn in 1990 by John Winkler in *The Constraints of Desire*, and which has become increasingly fashionable amongst classical scholars exploring ancient society and its *mentalité*.³⁴ Yet it remains virtually impossible for students to read Artemidorus, whose treatise is available in only a single copy in by no means all British university libraries in the adequate English translation that Robert White (1975) published with a minor North American press. I had always assumed that White's translation, difficult as it was to track down, had nevertheless offered the first opportunity to study an English text of Artemidorus—a decidedly non-canonical author of a didactic work on what to Christian Europe had presumably represented reprehensible ancient pagan superstition. But nothing could be further from the truth. A post-Renaissance European market for ancient dream

³² See J. Jones (1722). ³³ See further Hall (forthcoming a).

³⁴ See Winkler (1990) 14–44 and e.g. Bradley (1994) 140–5.

interpretation obviously existed long before a market for, say, most of Plato or for Aeschylean tragedy: Artemidorus found his way out of Greek early and with relative frequency. *On the Interpretation of Dreams* had been translated into Latin by 1539 (as a point of contrast, well before Aeschylus' tragedies in 1555), Italian by 1542, French by 1581, and English by 1606.³⁵ This was nearly two centuries before Aeschylus was first translated into English; astonishingly, Artemidorus could even be read in Welsh before the end of the seventeenth century.³⁶ Presumably this reflected a real interest in Artemidorus' diagnosis of dreams, rather than in his prose style. Moreover, even the casual reader of Artemidorus in English, consulting him in order to analyse a recent dream, will have picked up a considerable amount of educational information about domestic and civic life in the eastern provinces of the Roman empire.

A further point that needs emphasizing is the deep cultural penetration of ancient authors little read today, a penetration that can be fully appreciated only by paying attention to the history of translation. One of the most formative of all ancient books when it comes to the forging of the medieval and early modern male personality was the so-called *Distichs of Cato*, which contained moralizing *sententiae* dating from the third or fourth century AD and erroneously attributed to the great republican Stoic Cato the Elder (Marcus Porcius Cato). Benedict Burgh made these distichs available to English-speaking schoolchildren in verses composed in their own tongue as early as 1477, and they were still being read in another edition by the young Benjamin Franklin at Boston Latin School more than two centuries later. One assiduous Latin master, Charles Hoole, in the later seventeenth century produced a book in which the Latin of the distichs was interspersed line-by-line with his English translation, so that children could imbibe republican Stoic morals even before they were fully competent at Latin: Hoole's title was *Cato construed grammatically, with one row Latine and another English. Whereby little children may understandingly learn the rules of common behaviour* (1659).

Yet by the eighteenth century the personal morality and ideology of adults has been constituted more often in contact with Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. It was this ultimate source for the practical Roman Stoicism, applied to questions of everyday life, that resonated so profoundly in the nineteenth century, and above all with British autodidacts and with the makers of the North American self-help culture such as Dale Carnegie.³⁷ Although numerous new versions were published, it is in this case easy to point to the book that first turned Marcus Aurelius into a classic: it was Meric Casaubon's 1634 translation, *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the Roman emperor, his Meditations*

³⁵ Cornarius (1539); Lauro (1542); Fontaine (1581); Wood (1606).

³⁶ T. Jones (1698). ³⁷ See Rose (2001), 34, 57, 260; E. Hall (forthcoming b).

concerning himself, published in 1634. This seminal work, a profound attempt to marry pagan Stoicism with a certain brand of liberal Protestant humanism, was repeatedly reprinted, set the standard for all subsequent translations, and itself remained in print until the mid-twentieth century.³⁸

Casaubon's translation of Marcus Aurelius was not the first attempt to bring this ancient Stoic to an English-speaking readership, but Casaubon was the first to engage seriously with the Greek original, rather than producing a secondary translation from a French version. And it is certain that more energy should be spent in applauding the sheer courage involved in being the first translator to put an ancient author into any modern language. It is one thing in the third millennium to attempt a translation when standing on the shoulders of previous translators, textual editors, and commentary-writers, as well consulting all the excellent lexicographical tools and resources now available. It was quite another in 1652 for John Hall of Consett to put the complicated diction and rhetorical figures of Longinus's treatise *On the Sublime* into English for the very first time, under the title *Dionysius Longinus of the height of eloquence*. Hall's lucid, straightforward effort was remarkable for a man without overarching intellectual pretensions: he was a moderate Roundhead who wanted to curry favour with his hard-pressed patron, Lord Whitelocke (currently engaged in a complicated battle of wills with Oliver Cromwell after objecting to the execution of Charles I), by furnishing him with some refuge from 'the Hurricans of these great Transactions'.³⁹ Yet this does not stop Sappho scholars (who, instead of actually consulting Hall's rare little book, just derivatively take their cue from previous books on Sappho) from routinely pouring scorn on Hall's rendering of the famous poem 'He seems to me to be equal to the gods', which is preserved in the Longinian treatise. Admirers of literary women could, however, be encouraged instead to celebrate pioneering female translators, especially since it has always been women *readers* who have been amongst the chief beneficiaries of translated classics.⁴⁰ The spirit of the translation pioneer suffuses both Lucy Hutchinson's deft, poetic Lucretius, written during the Interregnum, and the remarkable Anne Dacier's early eighteenth-century French translations of authors no English-speaking woman would have dared to go near before the twentieth century (Plautus, Aristophanes, Homer).⁴¹

The sheer hard grind involved in translating extended texts in ancient languages also needs to be better acknowledged. Philemon Holland was a

³⁸ Casaubon (1908), (1949). ³⁹ J. Hall (1652), 'Preface'.

⁴⁰ See esp. Thomas (1994) 19–67, a fascinating study of women's responses to Pope's *Iliad*.

⁴¹ Hutchinson's translation of Lucretius' *de Rerum Natura* has been published in a recent edition by de Quehen (1996). On Anne Dacier see Farnham (1976) and Santangelo (1984). Another important eighteenth-century translation by a woman was Elizabeth Carter's (1758)

seventeenth-century Coventry physician who between 1601 and 1632 waded his way through thousands of pages of Greek and Latin prose in order to translate into accurate and readable English not only Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, but Plutarch's *Moralia*, Suetonius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*. This is an astonishing achievement, especially since several of Holland's translations are still in use.⁴² Another pioneer was Francis Adams, a Scottish doctor who worked in a remote village general practice in Aberdeenshire, but between 1844 and 1856 produced several substantial and seminal English-language translations of Hippocrates and other major medical writers. He was able to achieve this only by working throughout the night. He later translated much of Hippocrates and Aretaeus the Cappadocian, but his first significant publication was the three-volume *The Seven Books of Paulus Aegineta, Translated from the Greek, with a Commentary* in 1844–7.⁴³ Paul of Aegina's compendium is of unrivalled importance both in the history of the development of surgical theory and as a conduit through which ancient medical doctrine passed through Byzantium. Adams's translation has yet to be superseded.

Some pioneering translators of classics have remained undetected simply because they are well disguised. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* made its first appearance in English-speaking culture as a Restoration heroic tragedy by the 19-year-old Charles Davenant, going under the misleading title *Circe*.⁴⁴ The earliest faithful translation of any substantial portion of any Aristophanic comedy by an Englishman was Thomas Stanley's version of *Clouds*, produced solely as an empirical source of biographical data about the figure of Socrates; it was originally published in his *The History of Philosophy* (1655). Its omissions include the editing out of 'words of... anatomical or physiological forthrightness'.⁴⁵ But an accurate enough translation of Aristophanes—if not quite a 'literary' one—it certainly is.

PERFORMANCES

Attending performances of ancient texts, or plays drawing on ancient myth and history, has always been a significant avenue by which less-well-educated

smooth and learned Epictetus. On Victorian women translators of Greek tragedy, see Hardwick (2000b).

⁴² See Considine (2004).

⁴³ See further Brown (1900) and Nutton (2004).

⁴⁴ Davenant (1677); see E. Hall and Macintosh (2005) 37–41.

⁴⁵ Hines (1966) 35. See further E. Hall (2007).

people could gain access to classical authors and culture. Yet versions of ancient Greek drama in English have on occasion, confusingly, been connected with live theatre only as comments on its conspicuous *absence*. The earliest translation of a Sophoclean tragedy into the English language was the *Electra* produced by an ardent Royalist, Christopher Wase, in order to protest against the execution of Charles I, the incarceration of his teenage daughter Princess Elisabeth, and indeed the closure of the theatres.⁴⁶ Two of the earliest Aristophanic translations into the English language were published in order to circumvent the proscription or censorship of theatre. One was by the Irish Catholic playwright Henry Burnell in 1659, when his remarkably lucid and faithful *The World's Idol. Plutus: a comedy written in Greek by Aristophanes* protested implicitly against both the closure of the Werburgh Street Theatre in Dublin and the conduct of Cromwell's army in Ireland;⁴⁷ the second was *Plutus, the god of riches: a comedy translated from the original Greek of Aristophanes, with large notes explanatory and critical* by Henry Fielding and William Young, a vehicle for criticizing Walpole's stringent new Licensing Act, which had put Fielding out of business as a man of the theatre.⁴⁸

The historian and would-be panegyrist of the history of translation of ancient Greek into modern languages has in recent decades been made increasingly aware of the importance of early translations into Latin, a language with an infinitely wider Renaissance and early modern readership. Here Aeschylus provides an illuminating example. Though the last major Greek poet to find his way into most modern languages, Aeschylus was in circulation in European intellectual circles almost as soon as the appearance of Sanravius' (i.e. Jean Saint-Ravy's) *Aeschyli poetae Vetvstissimi Tragoediae sex* in Basle in 1555. As the late Inga-Stina Ewbank pointed out in a superb study, the fact that Sanravius omitted *Agamemnon*, the first play of the *Oresteia* trilogy, had an inestimable impact on the reception of the story of the house of Atreus in Renaissance drama.⁴⁹ And other scholars are increasingly happy to accept that the influence of Greek drama on the Renaissance stage, although thoroughly mediated through Latin versions and the rumours of their contents that were in circulation, was considerably greater than it has hitherto been customary to acknowledge.⁵⁰ Although most of the influential Latin translations of difficult Greek authors were produced on the Continent, there is one rare example of a highly literary version of a play by Sophocles written in England, the poet Thomas Watson's *Antigone* (1581). This even

⁴⁶ Wase (1649).

⁴⁷ On Burnell (1659) see the discussion of Wyles (2007).

⁴⁸ See Fielding and Young (1742), with Hines (1966) 158–231; E. Hall and Macintosh (2005) 104; Hall (2007).

⁴⁹ Ewbank (2005).

⁵⁰ Schleiner (1990); Kerrigan (1996) 173–4.

attempts to produce in Latin the effect of Sophocles' lyric metres in the choral odes.⁵¹ Watson's translation informed at least one scene in Shakespeare—the appearance of Lear with Cordelia in his arms, long since believed to have been inspired by Creon's entrance, carrying Haemon's corpse, in *Antigone*.⁵²

The anti-censorship Aristophanes and the humanist Latin Aeschylus and Sophocles remind us that the history of translation, at least of ancient playscripts, is often impossible to disentangle from the history of theatricals. The earliest version of any play by Plautus in the English language was a verse adaptation of *Amphitryo* printed in 1565 with performance by children in mind.⁵³ Translation historians have systematically ignored or forgotten the fact that such texts frequently received their first airing in a modern language for a performance of some kind: Thomas Sheridan's was the first English-language translation of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (1725). It preceded by four years (and is vastly superior to) George Adams's prosaic attempt in the second volume of his complete but stolid *The Tragedies of Sophocles* (1729). Sheridan made his Sophocles specially attractive because it was designed to be distributed amongst his audience (many of whom, as fond mothers and sisters, were women) before a Greek-language production of *Philoctetes* at his Dublin school.⁵⁴ Extended passages from Euripides' *Medea* were first heard by the spectators in London theatres long before the publication of the first translation of all Euripides' surviving dramas in two volumes by Robert Potter (1781–3): both Charles Gildon's *Phaeton; or, the Fatal Divorce*, performed in 1698, and Charles Johnson's *The Tragedy of Medæa*, performed at Drury Lane three decades later, presented their audiences with scenes and speeches from the Euripidean archetype. The same can be said of Richard West's tragedy *Hecuba* (so austere in its fidelity to the original that it was an inevitable flop at Drury Lane in 1726).⁵⁵

The lateness of the translation of Aristophanes into English was noteworthy given his well-known impact on the comedies of Ben Jonson. Several of the ancient Greek comedies were completely inaccessible in English until the mid-eighteenth century; others until the early nineteenth; one or two (especially *Lysistrata*) enjoyed nothing like a faithful translation until nearly the twentieth century. Yet a remarkable early version of *Plutus*, although not first published in 1651, was written in the early 1630s by the cavalier dramatist Thomas Randolph, almost certainly for performance in a private venue. One of the 'Sons of Ben' who gathered around Jonson, Randolph thus became the

⁵¹ See Binns (1978) 146–7.

⁵² See e.g. the comments of Francklin (1759) 86 n.

⁵³ Warner (1595).

⁵⁴ Sheridan (1725).

⁵⁵ See Gildon (1698); West (1726); Johnson (1731); E. Hall and Macintosh (2005) ch. 3.

man responsible for the earliest English-language version of any Aristophanic play. His *Ploutophthalmia Ploutogamia, A pleasant comedie: entitled Hey for honesty, down with knavery* is a breathtakingly adventurous and original translation of *Plutus* to a setting in Caroline London, and combines detailed attention to the ancient plot with some irreverent and biting contemporary satire, the victims of which include both dour, corrupt Roundheads, the Levellers, avaricious Anglican clerics, and the Pope himself.⁵⁶

Indeed, it was only when attempting to write the history of performance of ancient drama on the British stage, in *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660–1914*, that Fiona Macintosh and I first became fully aware of the complexities of the relationship between performance and translation since the Restoration. It is not just that many ancient dramas were first translated in relation to performance, since an excellent *adaptation* can even ultimately inspire the production of a *translation*. Take, for example, James Thomson's *Agamemnon*, an important tragedy staged at Drury Lane in 1738. Thomson, an outstanding classical scholar, had undoubtedly consulted both Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in Greek, and Thomas Stanley's Latin 'crib' (included in his scholarly edition of Aeschylus, published in 1663) as well as Seneca's *Agamemnon*.⁵⁷ But Thomson's play is a new work, which makes significant alterations in the ethical motivations and characterization of the leading roles. Its success in performance in both England and France, along with the praise bestowed on it by the German critic Gotthold Lessing in his famous treatise *Laocoön* (1766), created an interest in the Greek play that made it inevitable that modern-language translations would be attempted, and they duly appeared in French in 1770, English in 1777, and, from 1786 onwards, in German.⁵⁸

The existence of a good translation is also much more likely to lead to a performance, which in turn creates the kind of interest that results in more translations and more performances. Aristophanes was never performed in a non-adapted translation in Britain until the early 1870s, and he would have been unlikely to enjoy a performance even then had it not been for the cultural presence of John Hookham Frere's speakable, rhythmic, and idiomatic late-Georgian translation of *Frogs*, which had been republished in 1872.⁵⁹ This inherently performable version was much imitated, unconsciously or consciously, in the relatively inferior Victorian translations of Benjamin Bickley Rogers that later reached even wider audiences than Frere and were

⁵⁶ See Randolph (1651) 2, 17, 45–6 with E. Hall (2007).

⁵⁷ See further E. Hall and Macintosh (2005) 124–7; E. Hall (2005).

⁵⁸ Le Franc de Pompignan (1770); Potter (1777); Jenisch (1786); Stolberg (1802).

⁵⁹ Although first privately printed in 1839, Frere had produced his translation of *Acharnians*, *Knight*, *Birds*, and *Frogs* more than a decade earlier.

read throughout the twentieth century.⁶⁰ But it was Frere's translation that was staged in Edinburgh in an influential private theatre, whence word of the experiment spread. These discussions contributed directly to the early academic performances of ancient Greek plays in Oxford and Cambridge in the 1880s, the English-language translations of Gilbert Murray, and the twentieth-century rediscovery of Aristophanes and indeed the Greek tragedians in the professional theatre.⁶¹

There were certainly thousands whose first access to ancient Greece was through watching performances of Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides' *Medea* and *Trojan Women* during the first four decades of the twentieth century; Murray's translations awakened interest in theatres, internationally as well as in the UK, far beyond the London avant-garde circles where they received their premières.⁶² At The People's Theatre in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (which had been founded by Norman and Edith Veitch in the premises of the local branch of the British Socialist Party, but the productions of which were attended by both local residents and undergraduates), not only three plays by Euripides, but Aristophanes' *Frogs* and even Menander's *Perikeiromene* were performed between 1931 and 1946 in Murray's translations.⁶³

MASS MARKETS

Murray's translations were repeatedly reprinted until the mid-1950s,⁶⁴ and any translation that receives wide dissemination can radically affect cultural history. It is difficult to overstate the importance to the Romantic movement and subsequently Victorian aesthetics of Robert Potter's translation of Aeschylus, which first appeared in 1777 and was reprinted or reissued in a different format many times.⁶⁵ Before that date, only a small minority of people had ever been able to read Aeschylus at all: the only tragedy by this dramatist to have been translated into English was the one written in by far the easiest Greek—*Prometheus Bound*—just four years previously.⁶⁶ Yet Potter's translation has suffered little but routine obloquy for the more than two centuries since it first appeared, much of which has been little more than

⁶⁰ See Postgate (1922) 8.

⁶¹ See E. Hall (2007); E. Hall and Macintosh (2005) 508–20.

⁶² See e.g. the collected translations of Euripides in Murray (1954).

⁶³ See Veitch (1950), 3, 6, 13, 201–8. For productions of Murray's translations in similar theatres in Canning Town and Sheffield, see Rose (2001) 80.

⁶⁴ See the collected translations of Euripides in Murray (1954).

⁶⁵ In 1778, 1779, 1809, 1812, 1819, 1831, 1833, 1886, 1892, 1895.

⁶⁶ Morell (1773).

reflex imitation of Dr Johnson's description of the work as 'verbiage'.⁶⁷ When experts in translation compare Potter unfavourably with the twentieth-century translations of Aeschylus by, for example, the poet Louis MacNeice, they never point out that Potter was actually brave enough to be the initial pioneer in the creation of English-language substitutes for the pyrotechnical effects of Aeschylean neologistic compounds and arcane diction—a task that nobody had ever felt confident enough to essay before him, and which inevitably resulted in the accumulation of adjectives to which Dr Johnson so objected.⁶⁸ Nobody can translate Aeschylus without using a lot of words.

Yet there is no rival in importance to cultural history of E. V. Rieu's novelistic prose translation of the *Odyssey*, the founding volume of the Penguin Classics series, first published for just one shilling and sixpence in 1946 (early copies were misdated 1945). By 1964 it had sold over two million copies, which was a staggering feat; sales now exceed three million. Until the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Rieu's *Odyssey* actually reigned supreme as *the* bestselling paperback in the UK, whereas only two of the versions of the *Odyssey* available for the whole of the two inter-war decades had achieved sales of even three thousand copies.⁶⁹ But Rieu's translation has been repeatedly republished; it has been recorded as an audiobook; it has been abridged for children; it has been illustrated with lithographs by Elisabeth Frink; it has been excerpted and interspersed with passages from more recent authors; it has been revised by his son Christopher Rieu and reissued; it is still in print at Penguin.⁷⁰ The irony is that Penguin were initially very concerned about the financial viability of the project. But later the editor-in-chief, William Emrys Williams, downplayed Homer's role by observing that Rieu had 'made a good book better'!⁷¹

Where translations have reached very large numbers of readers through the medium of mass-market, multivolume published series, the urgency of reappraising the actual translations can hardly be overemphasized. It is not just that older translations routinely bowdlerized or compressed their originals in ways that would be unlikely to be tolerated today.⁷² For the time has also come to examine systematically the ideological as well as the aesthetic issues involved in studying Latin or Greek authors in translation. It can be enormously important to point out to students where, for example, translators have obscured the detailed linguistic construction of gender in ancient texts by insensitive—or downright sexist—translation practice. The same can be

⁶⁷ See further Stoker (1993).

⁶⁸ See e.g. Brower (1974) 159–80.

⁶⁹ See further Sutherland (2002) 21–2.

⁷⁰ Rieu (1995); Wormald (1958); Rieu (1974), (2003).

⁷¹ Morpurgo (1979) 216.

⁷² See the remarks of Postgate (1922), especially 30–76.

said of class, or ethnicity, or metaphysics, or the portrayal of psychological illness. Translation offers the opportunity to traduce meaning as well as to transfer it into a different vocabulary and syntactical system: *traduttori traditori*. Interestingly, old and therefore copyright-free nineteenth-century translations, often those used originally in mass-market editions, have suddenly become pervasive again with the rise of the internet, and the emergence of web resources which make classic works freely available, in particular Project Gutenberg.⁷³ The values embedded in such translations need to be historically contextualized. Gutenberg and similar projects therefore make even more pressing the need to ask questions about their provenance, the social attitudes and background of the original translators, and the purposes for which they were commissioned.

The most famous mass-market classics before the foundation of Penguin Classics (besides the more academically oriented Loeb Classical Library) were the volumes of Greek and Latin authors included in Joseph Dent's *Everyman's Library*. Dent founded this ambitious series in 1906 in order to make great literature available to every kind of reader: 'the worker, the student, the cultured man, the child, the man and the woman'.⁷⁴ He was the son of a painter and decorator in Darlington, Co. Durham, who had insisted to his children that books were 'an engine of equality', and as a result Dent retained a fierce determination to sell the classics at what he always called a suitably 'democratic price'—initially just one shilling.⁷⁵ But the history of such series probably begins with the eighteen-volume *The Works of the Greek and Roman Poets, translated into English Verse*, published by Suttaby, Evance, & Fox in London, in attractive volumes designed to look as good on the bookshelf as to feel in the hand. These publishers specialized in vast, commercially motivated reprintings of material that was already in the public domain, such as their much larger *The Works of the British Poets*. The contents of their series of ancient classics was predictably dominated by Augustan favourites. It included Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes* and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Pope's translation (1809), Theocritus, Virgil (in Dryden's version), Pindar, Anacreon with Sappho and Musaeus (1810), Hesiod and Apollonius' *Argonautica* (1811), Lucan's *Pharsalia* (in Nicholas Rowe's version), Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Juvenal with other satirists, and Tibullus (1812). In 1813 these were all reissued

⁷³ An excellent start for those wishing to consult translations of classical authors on the Internet without cost can be made by exploring the round-up of websites at <<http://www.metronet.lib.mn.us/grants/ebooks2.cfm>>, accessed 25 March 2006. My thanks go to Richard Poynder for help on this and related issues.

⁷⁴ Dent (1928) 123.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 124; on his father *ibid.* 2, 5–11. See also his comments on putting Livy 'in the hands of the people', 137.

together, spread over eighteen volumes. The preference for epic poetry is obvious, as is the absence of dramatic poetry.

A far greater cultural impact was achieved by Henry George Bohn's *Classical Library*, founded in 1848. It was only the third of the several series by which Bohn, the son of a German immigrant to London, changed the landscape of British reading: it followed his *Standard Library*, and his *Scientific and Antiquarian Library* (1847). Subsequently he also founded the *Illustrated, Shilling, Ecclesiastical*, and *Philological Libraries* and the *British Classics* (1849–53). According to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1884, Bohn's books, sold at five shillings or less, 'established the habit in middle-class life, of purchasing books instead of obtaining them from a library'.⁷⁶ Bohn's books sold well in North America: Ralph Waldo Emerson said that Bohn had done 'as much for literature as railroads have done for internal intercourse'.⁷⁷ The kind of reader who makes Bohn's venture so important includes Richard Jefferies, the dairyman's son who became an influential writer. He started voraciously to read the ancient classics in Bohn's editions at the age of 18.⁷⁸ Bohn's Classical Library brought to a mass Victorian readership even previously obscure prose, such as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (translated, with intelligent notes, by John Henry MacMahon, a Dublin churchman, in 1857), and Strabo's *Geography*, which had never before appeared in English. The last eleven books in the version published by Bohn were those which had been produced as a gargantuan labour, apparently of love, by three generations of the Falconer family—Thomas, Thomas, and William.⁷⁹

Bohn also provided income for such unsung heroes of translation history as Theodore Buckley, an impoverished freelance near-autodidact who never forgot his humiliating experience as a lower-class charity boy at Oxford: his satirical views on social class and education found trenchant expression in his novel *The Natural History of Tuft-hunters and Toadies* (1848). Buckley's translations for Bohn included Aristotle's *Poetics*, Sophocles, Euripides, Homer, and extensive revisions of earlier translations of Virgil and Horace. Another longsuffering Bohn translator was Henry Riley, who eked out a living through literary work teaching before dying in 1878 from illness caused, it was said, by 'hard mental work'. This had included translating Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, *Tristia* (1851), and *Heroides* (1852). The *Comedies of Plautus* appeared in 1852, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, the *Comedies of Terence*, and the *Fables of Phaedrus* in 1853; with Dr John Bostock he also produced the massive six-volume *Natural History* of the elder Pliny (1855–7). A third hardworking Bohn translator was John Selby Watson, far better known as the notorious

⁷⁶ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 5th ser. 257 (1884), 413.

⁷⁷ Mumby (1910) 400.

⁷⁸ Rossabi (2004).

⁷⁹ See Sherbo (2004).

‘Stockwell Murderer’ (he ended his days in penal servitude, his death sentence having been commuted), who contributed most of Xenophon, Cicero on oratory and some letters, and Quintilian. Bohn’s Victorian initiative surely deserves to be considered the most important breakthrough moment in the history of making classics accessible far and wide. As recently as 1966, one American scholar could conclude his brief discussion of Bohn’s Classical Library by saying that he did not need to speak of its great popularity ‘for the translations have been on the shelves of almost every educated family in England and America for the last sixty years’.⁸⁰

DISCOVERIES

Exploring the history and role of mass-market translations, disinterring long-forgotten vernacular versions of classical authors, appreciating the importance of performance as access route to the classics, and applauding the hard work and courage of the pioneers in the field could therefore all have a significant role to play in breaking down the sort of prejudices that, in an era of fast-expanding higher education, lead to the study of the ancient Greeks and Romans being discarded altogether. For translation history conducted along the lines suggested above can create a sense of tradition by dispelling the notion that the study of Greek and Latin, and translation from them, have been dominated by the minority of very well-educated men—plus a few exceptional women—who could enjoy the leisure for private reading, and were somehow mysteriously endowed with an accordingly refined sensibility. Far more people have historically desired (and have been able to satisfy their desire for) access to the thoughts and texts of the ancient Greek and Latin-speaking inhabitants of the Mediterranean through translation into modern languages than through reading them in the languages of their original composition. If a reasonably reliable translation exists, the question recently asked with characteristic brilliance by Simon Goldhill—who really does need Greek?—very soon arises.⁸¹ (One might add, ‘or Latin, for that matter’). Few people in the English Renaissance could read Greek, and yet one of the rare scholars to think in general terms about the history of Renaissance translations from Greek into English has concluded ‘that the publishers during the latter part of the sixteenth and the first part of the seventeenth century evidently found Greek translations a paying proposition’.⁸² If it is permissible

⁸⁰ Foster (1966) p. xx.

⁸¹ Goldhill (2002), esp. the thoughtful conclusion on 299.

⁸² Foster (1966) p. xiv; see also Lathrop (1967).

to do anything so open to the charge of reductive methodology as define knowledge of classical texts *quantitatively*, it is unarguable that far more of them have historically been accessed far more of the time in the languages spoken by their post-Renaissance consumers than in the languages spoken in the Graeco-Roman Mediterranean two thousand years ago.

In his fine study of the reading culture of the British working class, Jonathan Rose has drawn attention to the extraordinary excitement that many individual autodidacts experienced when they began to read certain of the Greek and Latin classics (often Homer) in translation—the thrill of life-changing imaginative discovery. The Labour MP Will Crooks, who grew up in poverty in the East End of Victorian London, was dazzled by a two-penny second-hand *Iliad* (probably Pope's): 'Pictures of romance and beauty I had never dreamed of suddenly opened up before my eyes. I was transported from the East End to an enchanted land.'⁸³ It is this excitement that was earlier so memorably defined by the Greekless Keats in his rightly famous sonnet *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer* (1816). This is a poem usually brought to general public attention when some stunning new astronomical discovery is made, and yet it is actually an expression of the psychological experience of an English-speaking person reading an ancient author in English.⁸⁴ Keats has been infected by Chapman's personal feeling that he had actually been inspired by the soul of Homer, and that his translation was an act comparable with necromancy: in his *Odyssey* he promised his patron no less a gift than 'Homer, three thousand yeares dead, now reviv'd'.⁸⁵ To conclude it is appropriate to quote Keats's sonnet in full, precisely because it is such an intense and intellectually engaged celebration of the very way of accessing the classics that has historically been denigrated, and it can therefore serve as a manifesto for every student or layperson about to open an electronic text or a paperback translation of any classical author in the hope that it will 'speak out loud and bold' across the centuries:

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

⁸³ Quoted in Haw (1917) 22; see further Rose (2001) 4–5, 38–9 (on the Chartist Thomas Cooper), and 95 (on the stonemason Hugh Miller).

⁸⁴ See also the slightly different interpretation of the poem in Goldhill (2002) 186–7.

⁸⁵ Chapman (1615), 'Epistle Dedicatorie', F I'; see deForrest Lord (1956) 16.

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken;
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

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Translated Classics Around the Millennium: Vibrant Hybrids or Shattered Icons?

Lorna Hardwick

'Some others are simply cuckoos.' Thus Michael Walton has summed up the problematic nature of some modern theatrical responses to classical drama.¹ But are these new works as easily identified as the cuckoo? And what happens to the intruders smuggled into the classical nest, to say nothing of the original occupants? What kinds of connections between ancient and modern do translations invent and renew? In my discussion I shall look at the characteristics of some new translations and versions that are responses to Greek and Roman source texts and discuss some of the translation practices and critiques that are redrawing the relationships between old and new.² The protean histories of Greek and Roman texts and their translations ensure that the notion of 'the classic' is constantly being asserted (since translation ascribes value to the source) and subverted (since translations remake texts for new situations and therefore change perceptions of the source). Translations may intensify the iconic value attached to the source texts as they accumulate meanings and encourage veneration but because they situate and resituate the texts at the intersections with the traditions in which they are received, they also transform both the texts and their associated iconic status (see also Venuti in this volume). I shall contest simple opposition between the sometimes contentious hybrid energy of the 'new' classical texts and their supposed shattering of the icons that were the texts of Greece and Rome. I suggest that the polarity provides a gateway to exploration of the spaces in between. These reveal deeper processes in which classical texts, ancient and modern, may be seen as occupying previously empty sites in and between cultures, a situation which can generate transformation of cultural, temporal, and aesthetic relationships. I also suggest that this transformative

¹ Walton (2006) 187.

² The ideas in this chapter have developed from a paper delivered at the conference 'Translation and the Idea of the Classic' held at the University of Bristol in May 2003, and I am grateful to the organizers and participants for creating such a stimulating context for debate.

potential will only partly be fulfilled until both classicists and arts practitioners recognize more dialogic and less invasive models for translation.

The discussion is based on recent translations of drama and poetry.³ A feature of late twentieth-century culture has been the vast number of translations, adaptations, and performances of Greek drama and the translation and refiguration of Greek and Roman epic and lyric poetry. The word 'renaissance' is sometimes used to describe this resurgence. I use it only in the sense that the concept of renaissance implies innovation as well as renovation and that 'renaissance' takes much of its energy from various kinds of diaspora, in which spatial models of 'centre' and 'periphery' are redrawn and in which emotions of artistic and cultural nostalgia interact with the imperatives of the new contexts in which writers, practitioners, readers, and audiences are situated.⁴ This means that the associated translation practices are closely intertwined with the politics of locale, space, and geography as well as of language.⁵

In focusing on translation as a process I shall not confine my references to close or literal translations but shall include in the debate works which are more usually described as versions or adaptations. I accept within the general category of 'translation' those works in which it is possible to track the processes of engagement with a specific ancient text or texts but not those which are primarily concerned with a theme or myth.⁶ In discussing drama it is necessary in addition to work with two aspects of the translation process—the preparation of the text (which may concentrate on linguistic aspects with the expectation that it will be read 'on the page' or be prepared with staging in mind) and the actual staging (translation *to* the stage), which includes both the adaptations in the acting script and the semiotics of set, lighting, costume, movement, and acting styles. This phase may or may not involve the writer, but certainly involves the director, designers, and actors.⁷ Both poetry and

³ Further work on the relationship between contemporary public discourse and ancient historiography, politics, and philosophy is another important strand in the modern reception of classical culture but much research still remains to be done on the role of translation in mediating between ancient and modern in those fields. For classical texts and modern public discourse, see especially the work of Josiah Ober and Victor David Hanson; on ancient philosophy and practical ethics in the modern world, see Hursthouse (1999) and (2007).

⁴ For discussion of these issues see Burke (1998). For discussion of classical texts as diasporic texts see Hardwick (2006a).

⁵ For discussion see Hall, Macintosh, and Wrigley (2004). Hall's introduction gives an overview and the individual papers analyse various aspects of the phenomenon, including relationships with gender, politics, post-colonialism, the aesthetics of performance, and philosophical and psychoanalytic frameworks.

⁶ One way of getting round the problem of what counts as a 'translation' has been suggested by J. Michael Walton, who sensibly argues that it is better to identify what does not count as a translation rather than to set up a rigid template for what does: Walton (2006).

⁷ For more detailed discussion of translation to the stage, with bibliography, see Hardwick (2005).

drama also require recognition of a third dimension to the translation process—the construction of meaning added by the reader and/or spectator, partly in response to signals in the translation itself, partly brought by the reader/spectator as creative subject. This last part of the process may be said to imply a ‘democratic turn’ in translation practice and theory (to which I hope to return in a subsequent essay).

I suggest that all translation is a hybrid activity in the sense that the translator is working with (at least) two languages and cultures and is trying to produce a translation which is coherent in its own terms in its combination of features of the source and target languages, forms and contexts. This hybridity might be called covert. It is always a significant aspect of translation from Greek and Latin, partly because the historic status of the classical languages and the classical ‘canon’ has given the target languages a subaltern status that exists in tension with the ‘invasive’ status of target languages in many translation models. This ambivalence is particularly interesting in the case of English, which is now conventionally regarded as a language of imperialism. Translation of Greek and Latin texts into English is not only resonant of appropriation but is also an admission of inferiority in comparison with the original creation and ‘ownership’ of the texts. Moreover, when this is combined with the desire of creative practitioners (poets, dramatists, theatre practitioners) to make *their* mark, the potential challenge to and inversion of existing power relationships between source and target is multifaceted. As a result, much of the most interesting recent work is also hybrid in a variety of ways that are more overt. I shall aim to consider some of the most striking aspects of this strong/overt hybridity, including the responses of critics to the disruption of expected and settled cultural and hermeneutic relationships between the source and receiving languages and contexts.

HYBRIDITY AS A PROBLEMATIC CONCEPT

In the general sense ‘hybrid’ is a term used to denote cross-fertilization between different categories or breeds. Its meaning is variable according to context and is value-laden. It has, for example, been demonstrated that hybrid was a word that in the nineteenth century was part of the vocabulary of racism and included in its definition a suggestion of incongruity and loss of purity.⁸ This usage could also be transferred to cultural contexts. Critics have pointed out that the two main models of cultural interaction, those drawn from

⁸ See the discussion in Young (1995) 6.

language and from sex, merge in the hybridity model.⁹ These connotations can import into cultural theory the associations with use and abuse of power and of violence that were part of the biological model. However, a focus on cultural outcomes in late twentieth-century scholarship allowed the reconceptualization of hybridity as a metaphor for overcoming modes of thought dominated by polarities and strife. It has come to be described as ‘the third space which constantly rehearses and consumes its constituent parts, the principle whereby both cultural producer and cultural critic may evade the Hegelian dialectic in which traditional oppositions are resolved’.¹⁰ In a creative rather than merely evasive sense, hybridity has also been used as a central concept in the work of critics such as Homi Bhabha, who is concerned with cultural developments in post-colonial societies that seek to avoid confinement to frameworks of thought and action that replicate the polarities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ that were part of the material, intellectual, and psychological fabric of colonialism.¹¹ Hybridity of practice can thus be a means of moving on from the constraints of past conflicts.

For the purposes of this discussion I have drawn on four main aspects of hybridity theory. These are the capacity of hybridity: to unmask authoritative discourse; to create interplay between voices, both linguistically and culturally; to establish multiple identities as markers of stability and assurance; and (more negatively) to mask the reimposition of structures of authority (including those of race and gender), both by perpetuating them as one part of the hybrid relationship and because of the language of heterosexual breeding that is part of the metaphor and is so easily adaptable to power relationships, both political and cultural.¹²

The concept of hybridity also raises questions about the value to be attached to genes/ancestry/cultural roots. This is particularly significant in a political and cultural context in which status and authority have had to contend with crises of identity and legitimation. It is increasingly evident that the staging of Greek tragedies in traditional, modernist, and postmodernist ways positions them in relation to fundamental questions of cultural transition and gives them both a revisionist role in relation to Western cultural history and a performative role in the creation of present and future senses of identity. Furthermore, hybridity has become an important concept in post-colonial studies, a symptom of a sometimes uneasy relationship between cultural

⁹ Young (1995) 6.

¹⁰ Smyth (2000) 43–55.

¹¹ Bhabha (1994) esp ch. 3.

¹² For discussion of these in post-colonial contexts see Young (1995) ch. 1, which also includes a detailed analysis of Bakhtin’s concept of linguistic hybridity. However, I differ from Young in stressing the validity of the model for power structures of all kinds, not only in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

imperialism and the new forms of artistic creation which have accompanied struggles for independence and contests for values and power in newly liberated societies. In this situation classical refigurations have been particularly controversial, both within societies of colonizers and of colonized. Some post-colonial critics have deplored the extent to which classical material persists in post-colonial literatures—left-overs, they maintain, from the Western intellectual tradition imposed by colonial systems of education. From this perspective, translations of classical texts can be masks for the reimposition of structures of neocolonial intellectual and cultural authority. Others recognize the role of classical material in providing countertexts that contain within themselves the means to challenge power.¹³ Conversely, some classicists have called for ‘authenticity’ to be re-established as a defining criterion of the ‘classic’—that is, to the extent that authenticity can be reconstructed, whether textual, interpretative, performative, contextual, or space and audience related.

TRANSLATION AND THE CREATION OF HYBRID CLASSICS

Translation adds another layer to linguistic hybridity in that it moves beyond the simple model in which linguistic hybridity employs a diversity of discourses and/or languages. Even though in one sense every translation is a hybrid work, hybridity is not equally significant at all stages of the translation process or in all the models used to map them. George Steiner’s model of translation hermeneutics is a useful starting point for assessment of the extent to which the hybridity of a translation moves it beyond being the product of an aggressive relationship between ‘different’ discourses, languages and contexts. Steiner identifies four stages in the translation process.¹⁴ The first is the initiative to trust the source text—a trust that there is something there of value to be understood, communicated, and interrogated. The second stage is one of aggression—that taking this valuable aspect is invasive and extractive. The translation brings something ‘home’. So the question of the translator’s ‘home’ as well as that of the imagined audience or readers becomes crucial. The third stage is one of incorporation—meaning and form are ‘imported’ to the receiving or target text. Here the nuances of placement, domestication, and subsequent development are important. However, the ‘imported’ text

¹³ See the case-studies and the sometimes sharply contested theoretical analyses in Hardwick and Gillespie (2007).

¹⁴ Steiner (1975–8).

and its characteristics continue to have a vibrancy of their own, so the fourth stage is one of dialectical reciprocity. Steiner argues that this final act is one of examination and restitution. Something is lost, something gained, and understanding of this is part of the process. He asserts that 'the books must balance', formally and morally. I think that the dialogic aspect of translation awareness is underscored in hybrid works and merits further investigation. There is a reciprocal process of trust in the conjoining of cultures and forms, a migration and subsequent interaction in crossing and redefining borders and in filling the empty spaces between cultures, an incorporation of the culture of the target language into future perceptions of the source and the source context and vice versa. Both are changed through the persuasive intervention of the translation. I have used the word 'interaction' rather than 'aggression' to describe the second phase of Steiner's process and one strand of my discussion will suggest that the convergence involved in the exchanges and reciprocities of the translation processes associated with hybridity actually challenges the metaphor of violence that is explicit in Steiner's model. Dialectical reciprocity involves more than a balance sheet of 'loss' and 'gain'. It actually changes conceptions of the source text and language and of the target context and language by creating a 'text' that is part of a new network of relationships between both.

Examples of linguistic hybridity in the translation of classical texts can be found in a variety of contexts. One of current importance is the cross-cultural classics developing in the new South Africa. For example, in 2000 Richard Whitaker began translating the *Iliad* into Southern African English. The reason for his enterprise was that he thought that the various Anglo-American English translations he had used in teaching the *Iliad* for twenty-five years were, in language and outlook, increasingly remote from the speech and experience of South African speakers of English (whether first- or second-language English speakers). He also considered that the *Iliad* in a distinctively Southern African translation could 'speak' to his country at a particular moment in its history.

Southern African English is itself a hybrid language, as is the culture which gives rise to it. In addition to being shaped by particular historical and geographical circumstances, this form of English also includes vocabulary from the region's many languages (eleven are officially recognized in the new South African constitution) and elements have come from Bushman and Khoikhoi, Zulu, Xhosa, and other African languages as well as from Afrikaans.¹⁵ (English is the most widely known second language in South Africa.)

¹⁵ Whitaker (2002a) 65–9, also available electronically at <www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays>, accessed 25 Mar. 2006. and Whitaker (2002b) 523–33.

Whitaker has pointed out that while mingling and hybridizing of all these languages has always happened at the vernacular level it is now also occurring in 'official' and 'public' media—in writing, drama, and TV programmes. This may be in part a reaction against the apartheid policies of separation and isolation; it is also part of the process of creating a new South African identity which is both inclusive of difference and also recognizes that poetry and drama can express convergences of past experience and construct them in the present. Interestingly, Whitaker has found that in a number of cases local words are able to give a more succinct and precise equivalent to a Homeric term than can a Standard English equivalent. He cites as examples the term *lobola*, a Zulu and Xhosa word for bride gift and the Southern African English *inyanga*, a traditional healer or diviner specializing in herbalism, which he regards as a better equivalent than doctor or physician for the Homeric *ieter* or *ietros*. Perhaps most important of all, Whitaker's approach counteracts what he describes as 'a tendency towards inflation' in which standard English translations have made Homeric titles, institutions, and objects grander than the Greek would suggest. Thus his rendering of the Homeric word *basileus* as 'chief' rather than 'king' not only removes the accretions of power and British imperialism associated with monarchy but also resonates with the Southern African institution of traditional chieftdom. It thus offers restitution to both source and target languages and cultures.¹⁶

Linguistic hybridity as constituted in translation can not only braid together multiple cultural identities but also proclaim these as markers of assurance that underlie the contemporary writer's voice. This is a characteristic of Seamus Heaney's version of the *Antigone*, *The Burial at Thebes*.¹⁷ Seamus Heaney's occupation of classical ground as a means of crossing and redefining intra-cultural faultlines in Ireland is a phased process in his work, refined in *The Burial at Thebes* in a process that builds on the poems in his earlier collections, including *Spirit Level* (1996) and *Electric Light* (2001) in both of which he moves to the field of classical poetry to work out aspects of his poetic and political relationship with the tensions in Irish history.

Heaney's 'classical ground' is thus a complex and shifting site.¹⁸ In *The Burial at Thebes*, which he himself describes as 'a version not a translation' he uses a number of translation strategies to enable him both to follow the

¹⁶ Whitaker points out that, from the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth, English translations tended to use the word 'chief' to refer to the leader of the Achaeans. A detailed study of the changes in lexical practice at different stages in the development and retraction of empire might be illuminating.

¹⁷ Heaney's (2004) play was commissioned to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, 2004.

¹⁸ See Kubiak (2001) 71–86.

Sophocles text quite closely and at the same time to develop a poetic diction that reflects the interplay of strands in the Irish/English literary tradition.¹⁹ Heaney is sensitive to the linguistic and ideological strands that have contributed to the development of Hiberno-English. These include Anglo-Saxon and Latin as well as Irish and Ulster Scots. Ireland is unique among colonized countries in having a classical tradition that was associated with European and Irish culture and preceded colonial domination by the English, so classicizing elements in the English language were not necessarily perceived as alien to Irish culture. When in the nineteenth century English increasingly became the literary vernacular, the concern of Irish writers was more with transplanting the idioms of Irish into English. Michael Cronin described this as ‘a transition from translation as an act of exegesis to translation as an agent of aesthetic and political renewal’.²⁰ This could also serve as a comment on Heaney’s versions of Greek plays which bring together literary traditions in English, Hiberno-English, and Irish and mark Greek theatre and its conventions as a site for a convergence and reciprocal engagement that recognizes but is not constrained by the linguistic conflicts and cultural and ideological fissures of the intertwined histories of Ireland and England.

A key element in Heaney’s approach in *Burial* was to use as mediators translations by classical scholars, notably R. C. Jebb and H. Lloyd Jones.²¹ However, there were differences in his approach—‘They had a scholarly discipline to obey. I, on the other hand, did want to give the substance of the meaning, but my first consideration was speakability. I also wanted different registers, in the musical sense, for different characters in the play. You could say mine is a parallel text.’²² However, in approaching the story of Antigone, Heaney also drew on an eighteenth-century Irish lament, Eibhlin Dhibh Ni Chonaill’s *Caonineadh Airt Ui Laoghaire (Lament for Art O’Leary)*, the tale of a woman whose husband had been shot and left to rot at the roadside by the British. From this poem Heaney transplanted the three-beat line used for Antigone’s protest and established the resonances between the Irish tradition of keening and the women’s role in funeral ritual in ancient Greece. For the Chorus he also drew on the rhythms and diction of Anglo-Saxon epic. So the multiple cultural strands running through the poetics of Heaney’s dramatic text served as a proclamation of the confidence of an Irish cultural identity that drew on all these. The

¹⁹ For Heaney’s own commentary on the work, see the interview in Eileen Battersby, ‘A Greek Tragedy for our Times’, *The Irish Times*, Weekend Section, 3 April 2004: 55. In summarizing his approach, I have also drawn on Heaney’s account, ‘Me as in “Metre”: On Translating *Antigone*’ (2005) 169–73, and on his Programme Notes for the production at the Abbey Theatre, May 2004. For a detailed discussion of the cultural politics of the production see Wilmer (2007).

²⁰ Cronin (1996) 135–6.

²¹ Jebb (2004); Lloyd-Jones (1994), repr. with corr. (1998).

²² Battersby (2004).

combination of translation techniques that he used created a palimpsest of cultural layers and spheres of relevance for the story of Antigone as well as a 'braiding' of language that reflected the intra-culturality of Irish/English resister and idiom and its histories.²³

HYBRIDITY ACROSS GENRES

Heaney's fellow Irishman Michael Longley also crosses genre, moving epic themes and diction from Homeric epic to lyric in order to explore the relationships between past and present, public and private, and the conflicting demands of Irish cultural politics. This shift is important in poems such as 'The Helmet'²⁴ in which he recreates a view of the scene in *Iliad* 6 (lines 466–81) in which Hector plays with his small son. Longley brings the domesticity to a shocking end with the closing line taken from Homer 'and prayed that his son might grow up bloodier than him'. In 'Ceasefire',²⁵ Longley draws on the episode in *Iliad* 24 when Priam journeys to the Greek camp to supplicate Achilles for the return of the body of Hector while in 'Eurycleia'²⁶ he gives a sinister picture of the continuing menace of the boar's tusk which lay behind the scar which is Odysseus' badge of identity. Longley's exploitation of the Homeric recognition scene (*anagnorisis*) and of the reader's expectation through a *peripeteia*, or change of register in his closing lines, is a telling dramatic technique, transplanted into lyric. His use of reverse similes and inversions of time scale²⁷ combine to create for readers an experience which makes the Homeric equivalences unsettling for the present.²⁸ In Longley's work it is the cross-over between epic and lyric which allows this telling intensity. This involves him in several different translation techniques, including very close translations of Homeric lines embedded within the modern text (for example in the reconstruction in 'The Horses' of the mourning by the horses of Achilles for their charioteer Patroclus in *Iliad* 27). Longley also includes direct quotation of original lines. For example in 'A Poppy', in which 'An image in Homer picks out the individual/

²³ I borrow the term 'braiding' from Wilson Harris's opening address to the British Braids conference, 2001, published with a transcript of the ensuing discussion as 'Theatre of the Arts' in *EnterText* 21: 260–74. For the history of contest between languages as markers of Irish culture and politics, see Crowley (2006). The fact that there was a classical tradition in Ireland before colonization gave Greek and Latin a distinctive role in marking cultural space.

²⁴ Longley (1995).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Longley (1991).

²⁷ e.g. in 'The Horses', in Longley (2000).

²⁸ See Hardwick (2006b) 204–15, and for disruption of temporality Hardwick (2007b).

Tommy,' he alludes not only to Homer's image of the death of Priam's son Gorgythion (in *Iliad* 8. 303–8) but also to the further migration of the image in European literature through Virgil's passage in *Aeneid* 9. 435–7:

Lolling to one side like a poppy in a garden
 Weighed down by its seed capsule and rainwater
 ... (an image Virgil steals—*lasso papavera*
Collo—and so do I), and so Gorgythion dies.²⁹

The closing lines of Longley's poem create a metaphor from the successive shedding and replacement of the poppy's petals;

Two thousand petals overlapping as though to make
 A cape for the corn goddess or a soldier's soul.

This contains a multilayered allusion to a poem by Philippos of Thessalonika (the author *Garland*, c.40 CE) which links the corn goddess Demeter and the blunting of the sickle from harvesting. The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh used this as an epigram to his essay 'To the Corn Goddess,' written just after the beginning of the Second World War.³⁰ In the essay Kavanagh used agricultural scenes as a metaphor—'I first decided to abandon this kind of threshing and to join with Blake in threshing the stars of bright truth from their husks of material words. Threshing the stars is a bitter task, as Blake discovered.' Longley extends the metaphor, and the bitter truth, to the harvest of the dead soldiers. His combination of close translation, quotation in the Latin and allusion to both Irish and classical poetic traditions combines an ironic appeal to the authority of the ancient poets with a subversive inversion of temporality and hierarchy, in which the Homer image marks out the status of the ordinary twentieth-century soldier ('When millions march into the mincing machine') and the son of Priam metamorphoses into 'the doughboy in his doughboy helmet'.³¹

COLLAGE

Longley's lyrics sometimes come close to collage in their realignment of excerpts from and allusions to other works from different traditions. In

²⁹ Longley (2000) first published in *Broken Dishes* (1998); italics in Longley's text.

³⁰ Patrick Kavanagh, 'To the Corn Goddess,' *Irish Times*, 8 November 1939, repr. in Kavanagh (2003) 44–7.

³¹ For another significant example of the mingling of close translation and direct quotation of Virgil, in this case the Fourth Eclogue, see Seamus Heaney's 'Bann Valley Eclogue' (2003), with discussion in S. Harrison (2008) and Hardwick (2006c).

formal terms, collage is an aspect of classical reception and translation which engages closely with modernism and yet which, in the contexts in which it is invoked, also refers back to the emblematic status of classical texts and their subsequent diaspora. It opens new fields and makes new utterances possible as well as drawing attention to the absence of the old expected patterns. 'Collage is like language in that it seems to offer the prospect of infinite recombinations of forms.'³² It has been defined by Max Ernst in *Beyond Painting* as 'the chance meeting of two distant realities in an unfamiliar plane, the culture of displacement and its effects—and the spark of poetry that leaps across the gap as the two realities converge'.³³

In poetry it is possible to cite the Nigerian poet Christopher Okigbo's eclectic range of texts and cultural sources for his collection of poems *Labyrinths*. Sources include Orpheus, Aeneas' helmsman Palinurus, Ovid, Catullus, Horace, Virgil, Tacitus. Okigbo saw collage as a construction of quoted fragments and allusions—'the globules of anguish strung on memory'.³⁴ His aim was to recover the African alongside the non-African origins of the formal practices of modernism, for instance in Picasso's use of African masks in *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*. This reworked African forms of representation into the practice of painting, rather than differentiating them as allegorical or exotic subjects. In Okigbo's work, the poet becomes the locus of a culture of displacement and the generator of the recombination of disparate elements, a practice which outflanked those who criticized his use of 'Western' classical texts by creating a different kind of spatial relationship between the strands in African artistic history.³⁵

This notion of the poet or artist as the agent of recombination also underlies Derek Walcott's metaphor in his Nobel lecture *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory*, in which he refers to the creation of a new work from the shards of the past.³⁶ The ancient texts have to be fragmented and then reworked both ideologically (to ram home the awful truth that 'roots' cannot be totally recaptured, recreated, or relived and that it may actually be destructive to attempt to do so) and in terms of poetic and dramatic technique. Walcott recombines the shards, using his own diverse cultural traditions as the glue, in his major works *Omeros* and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*.³⁷ The latter adapts the narrative structure of the epic to create a collage of staged episodes drawing on the Caribbean tradition of Carnival and recreating the

³² Richards in Bery and Murray (2000) 229–39.

³³ Spies (1991) 21 discussed in Richards (2000) 229–30.

³⁴ Okigbo (1971) p. xiv.

³⁵ Richards (2007). ³⁶ Walcott (1993).

³⁷ Walcott (1990) and (1993).

Homeric bard as a combination of a praise singer and a blues singer. The bringing together of oral, aural, and visual strands recalls Walcott's painterly background and simultaneously improvises on the theme of travelling bards in ancient Greece and gives a shaping voice to twentieth-century black consciousness. In *A Stage Version*, Walcott's 'translational' technique has Billy Blue's opening song include the opening line of Homer's *Odyssey* in Greek, stitched into visual and aural puns on the relationship between ancient text and modern version of Penelope's loom:

Andra moi ennepe mousa polutropon hos mala polla . . .
 The shuttle of the sea moves back and forth on this line,
 All night, like the surf, she shuttles and doesn't fall
 Asleep, then her rosy fingers at dawn unstitch the design.³⁸

HYBRIDITY IN PERFORMANCE

Performance styles, movement, set costume, and design have an equally important role in the construction of many different kinds of 'hybrid' theatre production. They are not only part of the 'translation' of the dramatic source text itself but also direct the second and equally important phase of the translation process, to the performance on stage. Recent debates about the staging of Greek drama have drawn on the impact of Japanese Noh and Kabuki, Kathakali, Balinese masks, and Yoruba theatre and some scholars value these traditions for the insights they offer into aspects of Greek theatre that have been lost or marginalized, especially song, dance, colour, and the semiotics of the mask and the body.³⁹

Such theatre traditions have in common that they are highly ritualistic and non-naturalistic. When they are integrated with the subject matter and conventions of Greek drama they have transformed perceptions of its cultural scope. Notable examples included the performances in 1990–3 of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* as *Les Atrides* by Le Théâtre du Soleil, directed by Ariane Mnouchkine, in which Aeschylus' trilogy was preceded by Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In the staging of *Les Atrides*, Mnouchkine adapted both Greek and Japanese conventions and used make-up masks for the Chorus. The male characters wore Kathakali heroic make-up (originating in seventeenth-century epic storytelling in India) and could weep 'real' tears as when Agamemnon lamented the sacrifice of his daughter. *Les Atrides* involved a performative

³⁸ Published text, Walcott (1993) Act 1, Prologue, p. 1. For discussion of the relationship between Walcott's verbal collage and exploration of *The Odyssey* in visual collage, see Davis (2007).

³⁹ See e.g. Wiles (2000).

disruption of any easy association between revival of Greek drama and continuation of the hegemony of Western culture. Renovation and innovation worked together.⁴⁰

Also important are the integration of Greek and African forms and practices in West African theatre and the cross-cultural staging of Greek material in the recent theatre of South Africa, especially in workshop contexts. In West African theatre, Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (which was actually first commissioned for the National Theatre in Britain) filtered the action through the rituals associated with the Yoruba deity Ogun, emphasized the theme of slavery and added a second Chorus in which the leader practised the traditional African 'hollering' style. Soyinka drew extensively on the affinities between the Greek and Yoruba pantheons and especially between Ogun (whose powers include creativity, war, and liberation) and the Greek god Dionysus. According to the author, the cultural juxtapositions in the play emphasized the African notion of connected spaces rather than European compartmentalism. In his conceptions of the Chorus (which was multi-ethnic), Soyinka also emphasized the cross-cultural links represented by experiences of servitude and the capacity of Dionysus to unite the dispossessed.⁴¹ In linguistic terms, the ancestry of the play was also cross-cultural, reflecting the influence not only of William Arrowsmith's approach to translation but also of Gilbert Murray's translation of the play (1902) which itself encoded Murray's interest in the anthropological commonalities underlying diverse examples of ritual and especially Murray's emphasis that the insight and energy of ordinary people was central to Dionysiac religion.⁴² Soyinka's concept of connected spaces allowed the text and performance to move into a previously unoccupied space for cultural encounter and yet to retain links both with Yoruba culture and with the anglophone traditions on which his 'translation' also drew.

In South Africa theatre has been a dynamic agent in the building of consciousness in the new (post-apartheid) South Africa.⁴³ An example of 'cross-over' theatre that reflects the indigenous hybridity of South Africa is *Giants*, by Sabata Sesi. The play is based on a combination of the *Antigone* and an African legend. It was staged in Capetown in 2001, the action located in an unnamed African state. The production combined the music of African

⁴⁰ For discussion of the process of creating the performance, including the translations, see P. Judet de la Combe (2005) 273–89.

⁴¹ Soyinka (1973) with discussion in Soyinka (1976) and Jeyifo (2001).

⁴² See Macintosh (2007).

⁴³ This process has been extensively researched, initially by Margaret Mezzabotta and P. J. Conradie and subsequently by Betine van Zyl Smit and Elke Steinmeyer. For an overview and bibliography, see van Zyl Smit (2007).

drumming, African jazz, choral singing, and solo clarinet. A half-chorus combined Greek and African elements. The staging included dancing, mime, and African storytelling with a narrator in African mask and buskins. As with Jazzart Dance Theatre's role in the Flieshman/Reznek *Medea* (1996) and in the staging of the Walcott *Odyssey*, the body not only became a vehicle for crossing cultural boundaries and representing struggle, it also suggested the recuperation in modern productions of the importance of song, movement, and dance in Greek plays.

CRITICISM AND HYBRIDITY

Criticisms of hybridity in the written translation of classical works and in the translation to the stage have centred round several main issues—loss of lexical, formal, and thematic authenticity in relation to the source text; tipping of the balance between ancient and modern towards the modern in the privileging of contemporary correspondences (usually social or political); *contaminatio* by 'exotic' (i.e. non-European) performance traditions and/or intertexts with other aspects of the modern writer's work; the disturbing effect ('too unsettling for comfort'), either in relation to modern resonances or because the new work revises cherished aspects of the source text and/or context. These categories of criticism of course overlap. Here are some examples from thoughtful and knowledgeable critics whose comments are accordingly influential.

Bernard Knox analysed Ted Hughes's versions of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (1999) and Euripides' *Alcestis* (1999) and found many words that had no equivalent in Aeschylus or Euripides. Knox's discussion was significantly entitled 'Uglification'.⁴⁴ It focused on the introduction by Hughes of new material, on the omission of significant passages of the source texts, and on 'Hughes' bathetic sentimentalization'. Some of these criticisms related as much to Hughes's poetry as a whole as to his handling of the Greek plays, some related directly to Hughes's interpretation of the plays and to the distance of the new works from the old. According to Knox this feature made inaccurate the publisher's description of Hughes's work as 'translation/adaptation'. Knox was particularly critical of Hughes's *Alcestis*, which not only introduced vocabulary that seemed closer to Hughes's other literary work than to Euripides but also created new characters, as well as a vision of Prometheus and a talking vulture (a kind of collage of ancient world mythological figures that also resonated

⁴⁴ Knox (2000) 79–85.

with other aspects of Hughes's own poetry).⁴⁵ The image used by Knox was that Hughes's version was 'a desecration, the literary equivalent of spray-painting a moustache on the *Mona Lisa*'.⁴⁶

Comparison between presenting canonical plays for the modern stage and restoring an Old Master has become a topos in theatre criticism.⁴⁷ The surface debate is between the allegedly conflicting priorities of fidelity to the text as a whole and communication of understanding of a work created in another time and context and perhaps in another place. However, the modern writers' and directors' desire for innovation is also crucial and raises the problem of compatibility between their aims and the integrity of the text. This problem persists even among those who do not see modern performance as necessarily requiring replication of the entire ancient text at the expense of theatrical impact. For example, Robert Garland has summarized a consensus that 'the overwhelming majority of theatre critics and classicists acknowledge that the experience of watching Greek tragedy as a Greek might have watched it cannot be successfully mimicked' but nevertheless acknowledges a sense of unease 'at attending a production which makes us feel too much at home in our post-modern consciousness'. The challenge then becomes one of communicating the alien culture-specificity of the Greek in productions that inevitably are about the present, in other words of representing and commenting theatrically on the relationship between the Greek past and the staging present. This is a relationship that is bound to change according to audience and context and under the impact of differences in cultural sensibilities, hence the need for new translations and performance concepts.

It has been suggested that to maximize textual authenticity the ideal would be to commission joint translations by a philologist and a professional poet or dramatist. Most critics seem to feel that the linguistic relationship between the text and the translation would be the easiest aspect of authenticity to secure. Authenticity of performance raises further problems because it is not possible to retrieve ancient performance in the same way that it is possible to claim that a manuscript represents the closest approximation to the text. Then there is also the difficulty of replicating the daylight, size, and space of the outdoor productions and the impossibility of reproducing an ancient audience. However, some festivals do have outdoor theatre spaces dating from or reconstructing antiquity. In the Syracuse festival, for example, the translation is tested in the actor's school and modified according to the demands of fluency and actability. Garland commends this as good practice.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the

⁴⁵ See further Roger Rees (ed.) (forthcoming 2008).

⁴⁶ Knox (2000) 85. Knox identified one hundred and fifty intrusive words, some anachronistic, others from registers different from those of the Greek play.

⁴⁷ For discussion of examples see Walton (2006) ch. 10.

⁴⁸ Discussed Garland (2004) ch. 4 'Philologists and Translators'.

limitations of such projects have also been recognized, especially because modern commercial productions depend on the shaping role and public recognition of the 'star' director and writer.

Modern assumptions about the audiences for anglophone productions of Greek and Roman plays have led to an emphasis on play-texts which allow the direction and design to communicate the subtleties and allusions of the ancient text that are not included in the acting script. Modern theatre texts tend to be less 'wordy' than the ancient. Examples include Frank McGuiness's version of Euripides *Hecuba*, directed by Jonathan Kent, in which the pared-down acting version was written by McGuiness using a literal translation by Fionnuala Murphy, and Timberlake Wertenbaker's version of Sophocles' Theban plays in which the complexities of the Greek *philia* (kinship, friendship, alliance) and its variants were not explored verbally in the English as Wertenbaker thought that this would make the text too complicated for the audience.⁴⁹ This is part of a general trend in the attitude of directors and writers towards 'the classics', whether Greek, Roman, or subsequent. For example, the director Katie Mitchell, a prominent director of Greek plays on the modern stage, referred to the 'keyhole surgery' involved in Martin Crimp's adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull*—'I agreed that he would confront all the opaque 19th century references... we also cut away all the creaky 19th century theatrical conventions... [Crimp] compared the process to renovating old paintings... Some like the freshness and others feel that it loses the authenticity of the work. We wanted to see the text renovated.'⁵⁰

J. Michael Walton has identified the problem area as one of identifying the precise point at which the ideas of the source become 'submerged' by those of the translator or adapter (when 'version' becomes 'perversion'). His view is that the greater the divergence from the source, the better the new version has to be to get away with it. Brendan Kennelly, Seamus Heaney, and Wole Soyinka may do so, but 'Some others are simply cuckoos.'⁵¹ The metaphor neatly brings together a sense of theatrical shortcomings with an image that conjures up the smuggling in of the usurping text in the guise of nurturing the old, but he is not specific about the precise link between ejection of key elements in the source and the flawed aesthetics in the new. Some critics seem to suggest that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the two. Nevertheless, it is surely right to recognize, as Walton does, that each and every production is a new creation and to acknowledge production pressures and the directorial role as drivers of adaptation. Interestingly, practice in continental Europe differs considerably

⁴⁹ Parker (2000) 125–35, at 126.

⁵⁰ Mitchell (2006) 14. Published texts: McGuiness (2004); Wertenbaker (1992); Crimp (2004).

⁵¹ Walton (2006) 187.

from that in the UK. In Germany and the Netherlands there have been significant collaborations between academic translators and 'star' directors, for example in Helmut Flashar's close translation of Euripides' *Electra*, directed in an avant-garde production by Hansgunther Heyme in 2005 and in Herman Altena's association with the Hollandia theatre company and the director Paul Koek. This suggests that there is no necessary connection between scholarly authenticity in translation and in staging and is an area of translation to the stage that will repay further research.⁵²

However, in anglophone contexts criticisms of cross-cultural elements in staging have been intensified by the debate generated by Herbert Golder's iconoclastic article 'Geek Tragedy? Or Why I'd Rather Go to the Movies'.⁵³ Golder voiced a deep disenchantment with almost all contemporary staging, partly because he thought particular productions were flawed, but mainly because they were contemporary in a way which privileged modern resonances and acting styles over the Greek. His main assertion was that the ephemeral must never be allowed to occlude the essential. Of course, this encodes a particular view of the classical tradition, which is seen as a vehicle for transmitting a conception of the plays that is fixed and iconic rather than as a strand in a dialogic process of reception and interpretation.

Golder's view also entailed a rejection of insights from most non-Western theatrical traditions. He regarded *Les Atrides*, for example, as an 'orientalizing' of the *Oresteia* at the hands of Mnouchkine. Interestingly, however, Golder did approve of the religious equivalence between Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Lee Breuer's *The Gospel at Colonus*, an oratorio 'set in a Black Pentecostal service in which Greek myth replaced Bible story' (to quote the Programme Notes). This was first staged in 1983 and ran on Broadway in 1988, followed by TV, sound, and video recordings.⁵⁴ Paradoxically, *The Gospel at Colonus* brought together pagan religion and a modern US form of Christianity through the medium of popular and commercially exploited gospel music.⁵⁵ This was regarded by some black activists as itself inauthentic in terms of their traditions of struggle and lamentation. However, Breuer thought that 'The Pentecostal, Afro-American Church... gives a living experience of catharsis today' and further that 'All of us who are really involved in theatre on a spiritual basis are in it for catharsis... that is what the entire western dramatic culture is based on.'⁵⁶ This Aristotelian approach to drama

⁵² See Altena (2005) 472–89 and Woodruff (2005) 490–504.

⁵³ Golder (1996) 174–209.

⁵⁴ For detailed discussion of the work, see Wetmore (2003) and Goff and Simpson (2007).

⁵⁵ Wetmore (2003) 102–18.

⁵⁶ As quoted in the *New York Times*, Section 11 (Arts and Leisure), 20 March 1988: 5–17.

brings *Gospel* into the centre of the debate about the extent to which the notion of catharsis was and is a device to free the audience from emotions that may be distressing to them (including those associated with awareness of cultural and political fissure).⁵⁷

Michael Simpson and Barbara Goff have commented on the way in which *Gospel* attained critical acclaim but little scholarly attention. Their analysis suggests that the production had the effect of undermining historical and cultural difference by aiming to give its audience access to the communal experience of ancient Greek audiences by aligning it with a harmonious version of African-American religious culture.⁵⁸ This may have been a theatrical counterpart to the aims of the translator Robert Fitzgerald, from whose translation of *Oedipus at Colonus* Breuer's *Gospel* was adapted.⁵⁹ Fitzgerald thought that close translation involved translating the spirit of the source into that of the target language. If the spirit of the ancient play is thought to be cathartic (with all that this might entail for the suppression of uncomfortable emotions) then it follows that the exploitation of African-American culture in *Gospel* could have had the effect of taming both it and the Sophocles play by silencing its political context and impact. Goff and Simpson argue that, however aesthetically satisfying the celebratory aspects of the play might have been, they also stripped the play of the Sophoclean discussion of the politics of cities, which in turn meant that in the modern context there could be no criticism of the cities and politics of the USA—'Purifying Oedipus of his terrors and removing the ambiguities from Theseus, Creon, Polyneices and the Chorus, means that you cannot have any conflict and you cannot see how difficult it is . . . to build a community.'⁶⁰ So it could be said that in *Gospel* the reciprocity in the translation from ancient text to modern stage actually involves a mutuality of *loss*, an erasure from both the source text and the new work, made in the interests of harmonization, stage spectacle, and commercial viability. The whole debate about cross-cultural performance raises questions about the extent to which definitions of authenticity, or even essentialism, are actually shaped by the contemporary cultural hegemony. It might be said, for instance, that the cross-cultural impact of *Gospel* that was acceptable to Golder actually achieved aesthetic harmony by domesticating both Sophocles' play and African-American culture. The example invites comparison with Laurence Venuti's discussion in this volume of the

⁵⁷ Most in Depew and Obbink (2000) 15–35.

⁵⁸ Goff and Simpson (2007) ch. 3, 'The City on the Edge: Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus*'. I am grateful to the authors for allowing me to refer to their work in advance of publication.

⁵⁹ Penelope Fitzgerald, Preface to Lee Breuer (1989) p. xii.

⁶⁰ Goff and Simpson (2008) ch 3.

axiological order of translation, in which the value that accrues to the inscription of meaning in the foreign text includes meanings that have already been judged valuable by the potential receptors.

The ‘too unsettling for comfort’ type of criticism brings together adverse reception of several types of hybridity. It objects to the unsettling effect of cultural encounter and the resulting shock to certainties about both ancient and modern. A particular target for this type of criticism has been Tony Harrison’s film-poem *Prometheus* (1998), which has been challenged on the grounds that its exploration of the commonalities in ancient and modern sufferings creates a new mythology—as one critic put it, ‘There is an arrogant tendency to conflate all of the big themes of the past 100 years into one enormous supermyth.’⁶¹ Harrison’s film—poems, including both *Prometheus* and *The Gaze of the Gorgon* (1992), could actually be said to combine several of the major aspects of hybridity—language, genre, collage, and performance—that feature in this discussion. In his introduction to the published text of *Prometheus*, Harrison has written of his perceptions that film and poetry are closely related media and that digital editing of film can communicate the clusters of images in poetry.⁶²

Harrison’s work has also both gloried in and suffered from the ‘Phrynichos factor’ in which the artist suffered for reminding the fifth-century BCE Athenian audience of their own situation and troubles. Harrison traced the history of such responses in the foreword to his translation of Euripides’ *Hecuba* (2005), which was widely interpreted, and heavily criticized, for making anachronistic correspondences between Euripides’ play and the conduct of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, although its representation of the flawed processes of democratic decision-making was largely ignored.⁶³ Harrison’s translations and versions of classical texts have served linguistically and thematically to unmask authoritative discourse and to enable the interplay of voices, both culturally and politically. In his *Prometheus* Hermes notes the subversive effect—‘How can Olympus stay intact | If poetry comes to Pontefract?’⁶⁴ Harrison himself played the Spirit of Phrynichos in the production of his play *The Labourers of Herakles* in Delphi in 1995—‘Cast aside mythology and turn your gaze to blazing Miletos, yesterday’s, today’s.’⁶⁵ The play was

⁶¹ Keith Miller, *TLS*, 14 May 1999.

⁶² Published texts, Harrison (1992) and (1998). For discussion of Harrison’s translational techniques, see Taplin in (2005) 235–51; Dougherty (2005) ch. 5; Hardwick (2000) ch. 8.

⁶³ Published text, T. Harrison (2004). Herodotus 6. 21. 2 refers to the fining of the dramatist Phrynichos for reminding the Athenians of the contemporary disaster of the destruction of Miletos. For discussion of the cultural politics of translation and criticism, see Hardwick (2007*b*).

⁶⁴ T. Harrison (1998) p. x, and see the discussion in Hall (2002) 129–40.

⁶⁵ Harrison (1996) 145.

based on the one surviving fragment of the Herakles tetralogy of Phrynichos and therefore combined scholarly roots and authenticity (in terms of text and space and place of performance) with artistic invention.

The critical reactions to particular kinds of hybridity created through translation encode a number of features. First, they reveal a sense of cultural ownership, both of 'the classic' as texts and of 'classics' as an academic discipline, which simultaneously hangs on to the supposed ancient genealogies of text and performance and yet privileges some receiving and appropriating cultures over others. They also sometimes seem to elide the special expertise and responsibilities of the academic in researching philology and textual transmission with the rather different problems of the criteria for judging the aesthetics of translation and performance in modern contexts. Perhaps some aspects of these critical reactions may be dictated by an exaggerated claim for the total alienation of past from present, based on a desire that the texts should be read and viewed as much as possible in the original languages and contexts in order to preserve the traditional role of 'classics' as a subject. The effect of such desires would be to deny classical texts a continuing role in present poetry, performance, and public discourse. Since such a position would be unsustainable, given the vast numbers of translations and performances and the central role of classical material in the work of Nobel prizewinners such as Heaney, Soyinka, and Walcott, some accommodation has to be made. A more nuanced approach to the ways in which various kinds of translation negotiate the exchanges between the old and the new texts would invigorate understanding of both and suggest more sustainable bases for aesthetic judgements.

Let me make it clear that I am not underestimating the difficulties that classics as a subject has encountered, nor the value—on grounds both of scholarship and of intrinsic interest—of research on the philology of the text or the archaeology of performance. Indeed, I would argue that studies of reception and translation make these activities more important, not less. If there is to be a full investigation of the contribution of classical material to the understanding of modern literature and performance and of cultural shifts, there need to be new explorations of philology and cultural archaeology which recognize the relationship between the linguistic and the cultural in the migrations and successive phases of interaction between ancient and modern words, contexts, and performance.

However, I do want to suggest that while the historical and ideological role of genealogies and 'roots' has to be understood and valued, this can also have a narrow and restricting effect, inhibiting appreciation of cultural exchange and interaction (within the ancient world as well as the modern), and as a result marginalizing classics from its central role in cultural processes.

Post-colonial critics, writing about other contexts and histories of identity call this over-privileging of origins ‘nativism’ and it may be useful to pursue the analogy further.⁶⁶

Perhaps the purist classicist perceives the translation, adaptation, and creative use of classical texts as invasive (the second and aggressive phase in Steiner’s hermeneutic process), rather than as part of a network of encounters. They may feel that their ‘space’—the philological and contextual field of the texts and the values they generate—has been transformed so that it no longer appears distinctively ‘classical’ to the translator’s or appropriator’s eyes or to those of their audiences and readers. So no wonder the purists resist. Here is another way of putting it:

One of the first tasks of the culture of resistance was to reclaim, rename and reinhabit the land. . . . The search for authenticity, for a more congenial origin, for a new pantheon of heroes, myths and religions—these, too, are made possible by a sense of the land reappropriated by its people. And along with these . . . there always goes an almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical redevelopment of the native language.

I confess that my use of this quotation involves a sleight of hand. It is taken from Edward Said’s discussion of the construction of nativism as a resistance to external appropriation in Bengal, Algeria, Ireland, Africa.⁶⁷ Said goes on to point out how nativism, an obsession with discovering or constructing authentic ‘roots’ actually yields to the aggression and appropriation that it claims to resist in that it retreats into a laager, emphasizing difference and division and denying commonalities or the possibilities of meeting on unoccupied ground—‘it has degenerated into unthinking acceptance of stereotypes, myths, animosities and traditions . . . such programmes are hardly what great resistance movements had imagined as their goals’.⁶⁸

Similar issues were addressed by Wole Soyinka in his 1976 volume *Essays on Myth, Literature and the African World* in which he produced a trenchant critique of negritude, that is the dominance of stereotyped polarities between, in this case, African and European. Soyinka wrote—‘negritude trapped itself in what was primarily a defensive role, even though its accents were strident, its syntax hyperbolic and its strategy aggressive’.⁶⁹ In terms of my discussion in this chapter, a micro-analogy might be drawn between nativism/negritude and a purist ‘classitude’ that regards rewritings and rereadings

⁶⁶ The analogy is, of course, adopted only for heuristic purposes and in order to focus attention on cultural processes. This should in no way be taken to minimize the human destruction and suffering caused by colonization and its aftermath.

⁶⁷ Said [1988] in Bayoumi and Rubin (2001) 291–313, at 299.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 302. ⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 127.

of Greek and Roman texts as miscegenation of language and forms and 'colonization' by the ideologies and concerns of the present.

Said's discussion is concerned with the relationship between concepts of nationality, nationalism, exclusive identity, and nativism. He suggests that there are alternatives to these constraints—'moving beyond nativism does not mean abandoning nationality [cf. classical identity] but it does mean thinking of local identity as not exhaustive and therefore not being anxious to confine oneself to one's own sphere, with its ceremonies of belonging, its built-in chauvinism and its limiting sense of security... there is the possibility of a more generous and pluralist vision of the world'⁷⁰ and this involves, he argues, a liberation and transformation of consciousness.

Among the foremost enablers of the transformation of consciousness are reading, poetry, theatre, and education. Translation is embedded in all these and in the case of modern reception of the texts of Greece and Rome is a prime mover. The study of constructions of authenticity and of the historical importance of attitudes to 'roots' and 'origins' will continue to have a role in understanding the various ways in which classical texts have 'migrated' from the ancient to the modern worlds, but a continuing obsession with purism will merely intensify the sense of limitation and isolation imposed by the perceived need to defend threatened territory. A transformed consciousness and sense of confidence, stimulated by a sense of the value of classical material in hybrid translations and art forms will recognize that 'classitude'—like 'negritude'—is but a stage in a continuing cultural process, admirable in its celebration of identity and value but limiting its potential for growth if it rejects encounter and exchange in the environment of the present. The challenge now is how best to engage with the fourth of Steiner's hermeneutic stages and how to revise his model, not just by becoming more sensitive to the dialectical reciprocity between the source texts and the subsequent hybrids but also by recognizing the implications for the earlier phases in Steiner's process. A distinctive contribution of classical translations to the theorizing of the subject as a whole may be to show that translation can be supplicatory and interrogative rather than necessarily predatory. The target language may be subaltern as well as colonizing. It can negotiate with the source text to see whether the validity of its contribution to the lexical, formal, and contextual constructions of meaning can be accepted within the enlarged performative hermeneutic field occupied by the source and the translation. So what is taken (or lent), how and why this occurs, what is restored, what is found anew, and how and why source and target engage in dialogue at all, and in different dialogues in different contexts, are important indicators of intra- and inter-cultural shift as well as of the

⁷⁰ Said [1988] in Bayoumi and Rubin (2001) 291–313, 303.

continuing histories of Greek and Roman texts. The range of translation techniques and practices that have been mentioned in this discussion show that the hybrid and transformative energy of the translation (with all its provisionality) and the shattered icon of the source (with all its remaining potential for recombination) are both part of a broader mutual process of evaluation, understanding, and creativity. Historically and aesthetically they are interdependent.

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Intralingual Translation: Genuine and False Dilemmas

Dimitris N. Maronitis

AN ATTEMPT AT DEFINITION

Intralingual translation is still, from both a semantic and a functional perspective, a rather ambiguous term, which was nevertheless established by Roman Jakobson¹ in order to facilitate a distinction between this type of translation and what we refer to as an interlingual translation. However, there are still certain important issues that need to be resolved. One such issue in particular is the lack of a systematic record of intralingual translation within and outside Europe, something that would enable us to identify both the extent to which it is practised and the level of sophistication of such a practice, with the added advantage of allowing us to compare this data with the relevant data related to interlingual translation. Another issue is the contribution of a barely registered or acknowledged intralingual translation to the ordinary, everyday oral communication between speakers of the same linguistic community, whenever, for instance, one speaker is retransmitting what she or he has heard while at the same time paraphrasing or ‘translating’ the words of the first utterer. There is also the issue of intertextuality and its intricate and yet often neglected relation to intralingual translation, despite the fact that the latter also entails the use of loans from other texts that belong to the same language either in the original idiom or in translation. We could say that, generally, we tend to pass over in silence the fact that most of what we say does not come from us exclusively but is rather the product of a common practice, or as George Seferis (1900–71) epigrammatically put it: *our own words, the children of many*.² If one accepts that what I have said so far holds true, then one could claim that the privileging of interlingual over intralingual translation is symptomatic of an injustice

¹ Jakobson (1959).

² Seferis (1966) 33.

suffered by the latter. It is this perpetual injustice that has bequeathed intralingual translation with all the genuine and false dilemmas that it now faces.

Mainly, these dilemmas appear in relation to the three following pairs: (1) translation theory and translation practice, (2) deontology of translation and ontology of translation, and (3) translation method and typology of translation. In these three pairs the weight of the first term tends to obscure the importance of the second term. In so far as the first term is concerned, an often overbearing translation theory overwhelms the 'ascetic' practice of translation. In so far as the second pair is concerned, the often complacent deontological theories of translation suppress the ontological aporiae concerning the enigmatic nature of translation. Finally, in so far as the third pair is concerned, an alien method tends to take precedence over empirical typology. There are also other dilemmas, or rather divisions that assume the form of dilemmas, which we face inside the notional space delineated by the above distinctions, but also in the in-between space which separates them. Such divisions are those between oral and written, 'faithful' and 'unfaithful', systematic and ad hoc translations, between translation and paraphrase, and so forth.

These primary distinctions along with the secondary divisions just mentioned need to be taken urgently into account within the framework of Greek intralingual translation, which, in our case, covers the transfer of ancient Greek texts into modern Greek, with the exclusion of Byzantine works that attempt to imitate the classical style and the translations of literary texts from the Katharevousa into the Demotic.³ In other words, we have to deal with texts that belong to the Archaic, Classical, (early and late) Hellenistic, and Graeco-Roman periods. At this point it will be best to turn our attention to history in order to elucidate two things, both relevant to each other, in relation to intralingual translation.

The first question that arises has to do with intralingual translation's contested genealogy. It is important for us to decide upon the real relation between the source and the target language (ancient and modern Greek), both of which come in contact in the field of intralingual translation. This decision must be made by choosing between two contrasting interpretations: the first, ideologically charged as it is, considers the relation to be as unproblematically evident as the one between a parent and his or her offspring. The insistent claim in this case is that we are talking about one language, whose integrity takes the form of a historical progression of closely related chapters. The other interpretation, which

³ Translator's note: Katharevousa (now virtually suppressed) is the purist or 'purified' form of modern Greek, a compromise between ancient Attic Greek and the modern Greek vernacular, whereas Demotic (now the official language of the Greek state) is the form based on popular speech.

celebrates its liberation from the ideological prison of older times, claims that ancient and modern Greek are separated by a series of drastic linguistic changes (in prosody, phonology, morphology, semantics, and lexicon), changes which brought about linguistic varieties considerably different from the originating language, making therefore the attempt to establish any genealogical relation occasionally problematic and of dubious validity. It must be therefore evident that whether one accepts the former or the latter hypothesis will influence both the initial causes and the aims of intralingual translation.

The second question that arises from this recourse to history has to do with the reception of intralingual translation in different times, a reception that has oscillated between acceptance and rejection, and in certain cases encompassed both at the same time. The specifics of this ambivalence will be made clearer in what follows.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Despite the shocking lack of translations that characterizes the classical Greek world⁴—a lack that was redressed during the period when the Koine became the predominant idiom with the Septuagint translation of the Bible—traces of intralingual translation can be found as far back as the fifth century BC. Franco Montanari,⁵ for instance, refers to a ‘translation’ of Homeric archaisms (*γλωσσαι*) which can be found in Aristophanes’ *Daitales* (222 Kock = 233 Kassel-Austin), because apparently those words, in their original form, were not immediately understood by the students of the classical era. During the Hellenistic period and aided by the development of philology,⁶ any archaic forms as well as the annotations and the marginal notes in (archaic, dialectical, and classical) texts were presented in a manner that alluded to the periphrastic method of the earlier intralingual translation practices. However, the appearance of Atticism put a stop to the independent development of such a translation practice.

In the Byzantine era a rediscovered Atticism⁷ did very little to promote the translation of classical Greek texts in the developing language of the time. There were, however, certain cases where the exact opposite took place: so, for instance, Nonnos of Panopolis (fifth century AD) translated the Gospel of John into Homeric dialect, while Simeon, the so-called Translator (tenth century AD)

⁴ Kakridis (1971); Most (2003). ⁵ Montanari (1995).

⁶ Pfeiffer (1972) 1103 ff. ⁷ Hungler (1969–70).

paraphrased certain *vitae* from the vernacular to an educated language. This situation changed during the Renaissance mainly due to the fact that immigrants coming from Venice translated classical texts into the language of the era.⁸ Notable among these translations are: the translation of the *Iliad* (1526) by Nikolaos Loukanis and the translation of the pseudo-Plutarchian *Peri Paidon Agogis* (*On the Education of Children*) (1544) from the Corfiote scholar Nikolaos Sofianos (the author of the first *Grammar of the Common Greek Language* (*Grammatiki tis kinis ton Ellinon Glossis*)).

In the Greek schools during the Ottoman Occupation the dominant language was the archaic idiom, whose survival was largely due to the constant supervision of the official Church, which resisted the so-called ‘religious humanism’ represented by the patriarch Kyrillos Loukaris (1572–1638). This movement (also known as ‘ecclesiastical demoticism’) made its appearance during the sixteenth century among the progressive members of the church, urging important clerics and priests to adopt the use of the vernacular of their times in their sermons and, for those who attempted to translate from the Scriptures, in their translations as well. However, all these were preceded by the priest-monk Ioannikios Kartanos, who in 1536 published in Venice a book of popularized theology under the title *The Old and the New Testament* (*Hē palaia te kai nea diathēkē*). Almost a century later Maximos Kallipolitis translated the New Testament (1638) into the vernacular.

Outside of schools, however, and before the 1821 Greek War of Independence, one could find translations and commentaries of important ancient Greek texts, something that went a long way towards achieving the aims of the Greek Enlightenment.⁹ Adamantios Korais (1748–1833) was predominant among other scholars within that movement; his multi-volume work *Greek Library* (*Elliniki Bibliothiki*) had as its main object the critical edition, the scholarly annotation, and the writing of explanatory prefaces of texts belonging to the most important classical writers (Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Plutarch, etc.).

In the years following the War of Independence until 1880, intralingual translation was practically banned—with certain exceptions in the region of Eptanisa¹⁰—due to the utter surrender of the University of Athens to a linguistic and ideological archaicism. However, during the next phase of militant demoticism intralingual translation, forming an alliance with its interlinguistic sister, returned with a vengeance in its effort to prove that the demotic was a fully

⁸ Geanakopoulos (1962). ⁹ Dimaras (1977).

¹⁰ The Eptanisa (Ionian Islands) were ruled as a protectorate of the British empire up to 1864 when they were united with Greece. During most of the nineteenth century they represented a different social, political, and cultural environment than that of mainland Greece.

dependable idiom for the translation of texts of high literary value. A characteristic example of this was Alexandros Pallis (1851–1935), whose enthusiasm as a translator manifested itself not only in the translation of the *Iliad* (1904) and the New Testament, but also of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and of extracts of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Alongside Pallis, and largely inspired by him, Argyris Eftaliotis (1849–1923) translated Homer's *Odyssey* (1914–23), a project completed and published in 1932 by N. Poriotis (1870–1945), a poet and translator of Shakespeare. Some years earlier, Iakovos Polyas (1826–93), Solomos's commentator and publisher, had translated the *Odyssey* first (1875) and then the *Iliad* (1890), while in the meantime he published his (interlingual) translations of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1855) and *Hamlet* (1889).

It must be noted, however, that Pallis's translation elicited quite a strong reaction, while at the same time posing a set of problems in need of an urgent solution. The publication of the New Testament (1901) caused a series of violent confrontations in the streets, confrontations now referred to as the 'Evangelika' (The Evangelical Events). Two years later, in 1903, there was a repetition of the street clashes, from then on referred to as the 'Oresteika', this time sparked from the theatrical production of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* translated into a mixed idiom by Y. Sotiriadis. Pallis's translation of the *Iliad* followed a consciously ethnocentric method taking as its model the Greek folk songs. The idiom to which the translation was presented was predominantly the Demotic in its most extreme form and all proper names appeared in the form they had within the context of informal, everyday speech, i.e. 'Helen' ('Ελένη) is transformed into its familiar form 'Lenio' (Λενιώ), 'Odysseus' ('Οδυσσέας) into 'Dysseus' (Δυσσέας) and so on. It must be noted though, that Pallis himself, in a subsequent edition, rejected many of his most extreme formulations without in any way substantially affecting his fundamental translational choices.¹¹

During the twentieth century and up until the 1974 overthrow of the dictatorial regime that was imposed in Greece between 1967 and 1974, intralingual translations appeared all the more often in bookstores, but were hardly encouraged in secondary education and in the Athenian universities. The sole exception was The School of Philosophy¹² of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, which always tended to support demoticism. One notable example was the case of I. Th. Kakridis (1901–92), who, for the first time, wrote a book entitled *The Translation Problem (To Metafrastiko Provlima)*.¹³

¹¹ Triantafyllidis (1963).

¹² The Schools of Philosophy in both the Universities of Athens and the University of Thessaloniki must be understood as more of a comprehensive Humanities Centre than a specialized department of philosophy.

¹³ Kakridis (1936).

In it, and more specifically, in the part of the book devoted to the theory and methodology of translation, Kakridis discussed intralingual translation and its attendant problems, and then proceeded to his case study which was the interlingual translation of the Third Book of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*.

Despite the precarious existence of intralingual translation during those years one could find in the bookstores quite a lot of translations of classical Greek texts—undertaken by important writers, politicians, and scholars and aimed at a mass audience—either as parts of a series (the case of the publishing houses Fexis, Papyros, and Zacharopoulos as well as the Hellenic Library series of the Academy of Athens) or published individually. Some notable examples (Oikonomou and Angelinaras 1979) are Ioannis Gryparis's (1872–1942) translations of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Plato's *Republic*; Kostas Varnalis's (1884–1974) translations of Aristophanes' comedies; Apostolos Melachroinos's (1883–1971) translation of Euripides; Eleftherios Venizelos's (1864–1936) translation of Thucydides; Nikos Kazantzakis's (1883–1957) translation of the *Iliad* (1955) and the *Odyssey* (1965) in partnership with I. Th. Kakridis; George Seferis's translations of fragments by Homer, Aeschylus, Plato, Appuleius, and, in their entirety, of the Song of Songs and the Book of Revelation; and finally Odysseus Elytis's (1911–96) translations of Sappho, Rhianus, Krinagoras, and Romanos Melodos (Romanos the Melodist).

Following the post-dictatorship institution of the Demotic as the official language both in the state and in all levels of the education system (1976/8), translations of classical Greek texts made their appearance in school curricula; not, however, without a certain degree of resistance by those who insisted on defending the necessity of ancient Greek providing the wider normative context within which modern Greek could develop and prove its linguistic and cultural value. This had the consequence that, in so far as educational aims were concerned, the Demotic was undervalued as a language fit for carrying the weight of an intralingual translation and hence this type of translation underwent a similar process of undervaluation itself. Because of this, there appeared a certain imparity,¹⁴ contradictory in itself, especially among those who decided upon educational policy, which distorted the true nature not only of modern Greek language but also of modern Greek literature, since intralingual translations were in fact considered a problematic inclusion in the modern Greek canon. For the sake of specificity let me elaborate on what I have just said.

Modern Greek language compared with other European languages appears to be entitled to a certain position of superiority, thanks to its being the sole legitimate successor of the ancient Greek language, the supreme value of

¹⁴ Maronitis (1999).

which no one seems to be willing to dispute. At the same time, within the cultural space of modern Greece its modern idiom is attacked and derided as being woefully inadequate compared with its ancient model. This accusation appears all the more damning when it is directed against the linguistic, and by extension translational, capabilities of modern Greek, which is deemed insufficiently endowed to cope with the literary magnificence of ancient Greek texts. As a consequence, a certain outer-directed linguistic overvaluation is transformed into a linguistic undervaluation inside Greece.

As a conclusion we may say that whether there is a positive or conversely a negative attitude towards intralingual translation largely depends on the complexities of what is known as the 'Language Question' and each time it is intricately related to whether there is a perception of modern Greece either being dependent on or independent from its ancient past. Here, we need to make one thing clear: the linguistic and cultural dependence of modern Greece on its past coincided with the raising of national consciousness before and during the War of Independence and acquired additional force with the establishment of the modern Greek state. This historical conjuncture is, up to a certain point, the main reason why there has been a recourse to the ancient Greek world. It was the appeal to this ancient world that the official state used as a means of satisfying the expectations of the European philhellenes and also an attempt at fending off any 'attacks' against the nation, its culture, or its people.¹⁵

Finally, in so far as language and intralingual translation were concerned, there was a confrontation—sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely—between two ideological standpoints, the one being traditional and retrogressive, the other being modernizing and progressive. Though these two standpoints were both hybrid ideological formations they were distinguished from each other by their general orientation regarding the issues in question. The traditionalists considered the modern Greek present problematic to the same extent that they considered the ancient Greek past paradigmatic, thereby striving for its full or partial reintroduction into the present. The modernizers insisted on the importance of taking into account all the multifarious potentialities of the present without ignoring the important traditions of the past, traditions which they nevertheless refused to mythologize.

In these terms, all the (genuine and false) dilemmas regarding interlingual translation appear even more crucial when our attention turns to intralingual translation. Yet, this heightened importance allows for a better identification of the attendant problems. Among these, the pressing dilemma of whether ancient Greek texts are translatable or not is of paramount importance.

¹⁵ Skopetea (1997).

PRESSING DILEMMAS

I fully support those who defend the translatability of ancient Greek texts¹⁶ and I hold that their interlingual and intralingual translations are useful in more ways than one. I base this support on the following:

1. A good translation (especially an intralingual one) is by far the safest method of identifying and reading a classical text. This is achieved by focusing on the semantic wealth of the text; its articulation in terms of syntax; its stylistic idiosyncrasies; its rhythmic patterns; those ambiguous linguistic signs that sometimes privilege an interrogation into *what* is done and sometimes into *how* it is done; the multitude of elements, ranging from the texts' initial circumstances of production to all its historically conditioned interpretations that guarantee, without ever implying a spurious ethnocentrism, its illustrious status in both its age and our own.

2. A good translation (especially an intralingual one) responds to the inherent translatability of the text, the intensity of which depends on the text's literary value. Translation takes advantage precisely of this proportional relation between a text's translatability and its ascribed value. The constitutive elements of such a translatability are those that guarantee the text's survival, elements that are the indices of a certain potential that awaits its release.

3. A good translation (especially an intralingual one) is not a unidirectional act of a transfer of a text between two languages. In fact, what actually happens is the meeting of two languages and two texts somewhere midway on the bridge that connects them. The source language and the target language (or put simply the language *from* which we translate and the language *to* which we translate) meet at precisely the point where translation takes place. It is this meeting that acts as a catalyst so that certain latent or even inactive elements of each language are brought into play and energized in such a way so as to allude to their underlying linguistic substratum, to the hidden roots of a lost *Ursprache* or protolanguage, in the sense that Walter Benjamin gave to the term in 1923.¹⁷

When classical texts remain untranslated they lead a sort of lethargic existence while translation brings them to life by awakening and energizing them, thus enabling them to communicate with us. At the same time these texts reveal the details of their origin (historical, literary, aesthetic) and by doing so they free themselves from the shackles of dogmatic mythologization that imprison them. Such a linguistic transfer of classical texts from the past

¹⁶ Ladmiral (1999).

¹⁷ Benjamin (2000).

to the present also serves the purpose of proving their real value, this time in the context of contemporary culture, a culture which they affect while being themselves affected by it.

All these promises inherent in any translation are made even more explicit in the case of intralingual translation. In so far as the Greek context is concerned one thing that facilitates this explicitness is the specialized terminology. At the very centre of this terminology we may identify the noun 'κείμενον' (text), a word, identical in form in both ancient and modern Greek, itself a derivative from the polysemous ancient Greek verb 'κεῖμαι'. Of its many senses we are interested mainly in the following two: (1) to lie asleep or to lie in a corpse-like state, and (2) to store up a precious object for preservation, thereby transforming it into a 'κεμῆλιον'.¹⁸ If then we transfer these two senses into the semantic baggage of the technical term 'κείμενο(ν)' (text) the result will be the identification of a text's dual capacity as an index of intralingual translation: the sleep- or death-like immobility on the one hand and the transformation into a valuable item worthy of preservation on the other. It is on those terms that translation is called upon to wake up the ancient texts (or even, in some cases, bring them back from the dead) and to transform them into objects of communication after centuries of precious silence. This is a function that has all too often passed unnoticed and therefore worthy of our special attention as it conveys something lacking from the Latin term 'text' (from the verb *texere* = weave), which alludes literally to the art of weaving and metaphorically to the textural quality of discourse—a metaphor already found in Homeric texts.¹⁹

The second Greek term we are about to discuss equally supports our initial supposition about the fulfilment of the inherent promises of translation. This term is none other than 'μετάφρασις' (translation) (or *μετάφραση* in Modern Greek), a word first encountered in Dionysius of Halicarnasus (*Th.* 45. 19) and later on in Plutarchus (*Dem.* 8) and which also alludes to the hermeneutic process that accompanies the linguistic transfer of an ancient text. The word is a compound noun whose two constituent parts are the preposition 'μετά' and the noun 'φράσις', a derivative of the verb *φράζω/φράζομαι*—of Homeric origin—which means: 'to show the way', 'to explain', 'to counsel', 'to suggest', 'to contemplate', 'to perceive', 'to imagine', 'to observe'. If we suppose for a moment that all these senses underlie not only 'φράζω/φράζομαι' but also 'μετάφρασις' as an element of an intralingual exercise, then this crucial term leads us to the realization that the act of translation shows and at the same time explains an original text, following a process of contemplative observation, which does not exclude the possibility of the imagination also playing a

¹⁸ Anything (a treasure or valuable) stored up.

¹⁹ Nagy (1996) 86.

role. However, these positive associations do not so much apply to the English term ‘metaphrase’, which according to John Dryden signified literal translation, but rather to other terms in European languages such as ‘traduzione’, ‘translation’, and ‘Übersetzung/Übertragung’, all of which imply a process of transfer and movement.

Along with the two aforementioned terms, a third, closely related term also has favourable implications for intralingual translation. This is the term ‘παράφρασις’ (paraphrase) (παράφραση in modern Greek), which in Hermogenes (second century AD) signifies ‘φράζειν τ’ ἀτόδι’ ἄλλων λέξεων’ (saying the same, using other words) (*Meth.* 24. 3). As a technical term it serves a twofold function as a linguistic (grammatical) and as a rhetorical practice (Roberts 1985: 37–60) and has remained untranslated in international bibliographies. As a linguistic practice, grammatical paraphrase is of limited scope: it merely elucidates the meaning of a difficult word or expression. In contradistinction to it, paraphrase as a rhetorical exercise is akin to a hermeneutic treatment of a classical text as it fills up as it were certain semantic and stylistic gaps left behind by translation.

‘Παράφρασις’ distinguishes itself from ‘μετάφρασις’ by the substitution of the pronoun ‘μετά’ with the pronoun ‘παρά’, thus allowing us to identify its special role within the framework of any translation act—and more especially of intralingual translation. If the pronoun ‘μετά’ signifies a fusion in both spatial and temporal terms of the translated text with its model, the pronoun ‘παρά’ alludes to an oblique, almost casual and unintended approach to the original, the product of which may be a (written or oral) metatext, which in turn would function as an intermediary attendant or aid with the dual function of serving both the original and the translated text.

The next dilemma, which is intensified as one crosses over from the domain of interlingual to the domain of intralingual translation, appears, we might say, in three different forms. In other words, it appears either as a translational difference between the literal and the deeper contextual meaning of the original text; or as an opposition between a faithful and an ‘unfaithful’ translation; or as a distinction between a scholarly, word-for-word translation (something that in Greek is conveyed by the adjective ‘philological’) and a freer, literary one.

We may say, somewhat loosely to be sure, that the second and the third disjunction are both variations of the first one, which, by the way, precedes them chronologically. It was one of the basic assumptions regarding translation for the Romans, who are credited as the founders of both translation theory and practice by translating (and adapting) paradigmatic ancient Greek texts, literary or otherwise. Cicero (*De opt. gen. orat.* 13–14; *De orat.* 1. 155), the great scholar and statesman, favoured a freer translation, more sensitive

to the contextual meanings of the text as opposed to a literal one, whereas more conservative Roman translators approached translation as a literal rendering of texts.²⁰ This opposition survived, in this or some other form, up until modern times, thereby splitting translators into two opposing camps, namely those who are austere and strict and those who are more liberal or even, as some would say, 'libertine'. This distinction is also alluded to by the second disjunction, which by substituting a romantic or even sexual metaphor for grammatical literalness seems to give expression to certain romantic preferences rather than anything else. However, it is in this context that translational fidelity is rejected as being too conventional whereas translational infidelity lays claim to the title of being the free and emancipated one by its sheer audacity in front of important but at the same time also seductive texts, which are often misunderstood by pedants, who resist any form of seduction.

The third distinction between philological and literary translations is by all accounts due to the academic exigencies of classical philology, which has wanted to keep for itself the rights of any authoritative translation of classical texts, thus shielding them from any amateurish attempts at translation by those coming from the literary world.

All three dilemmas, due no doubt to the homology that exists among them, have something in common, namely that they establish a somewhat dogmatic distinction between conservatism and liberal attitudes. In addition to that, one can also observe a certain latent tendency to conceive of the original text as being divided between content and form. In other words, the very fact of deciding either to stay close to the literal meaning of the original or conversely to approach it more freely (something that takes the form of translational fidelity versus unfaithfulness but also the form of scholarly rigour versus literary adaptation) carries with it the implication that the translator sees two distinct facets of the original text, where meaning and style, signifieds and signifiers are kept emphatically apart. It is this separateness that goes some way to explaining why there is a widespread misconception of translation as fit mainly for bringing forth the meaning of a classical text but woefully inadequate to do justice to the stylistic peculiarities of that same text. Undoubtedly, this is a form of prejudice, which becomes even more pronounced in the distinction between scholarly and literary translation.

In order to be more specific we may say that there is a widespread conception of philological translation as being one that requires a wide but also profound linguistic and literary background knowledge. Therefore, it is considered as more appropriate for the fuller understanding and rendering of the original,

²⁰ Seele (1995) 8, 76, 80–4.

whose primacy is never doubted and consequently affirmed and advertised through typographical means. Conversely, literary translation shifts the focus from the language of the original to the language of its ensuing translation, from the original text to the target text, the latter often with the tendency to sever all ties with the former. However, in actual practice, both these approaches exhibit certain pathological symptoms: on the one hand, philological translation appears mainly to be stylistically neutral, whereas, on the other hand, literary translation is done without any consideration of the language of the original merely by reproducing and modifying previous translations. One more thing: it is the philological translation's academically secure status that must surely account for the fact that the classical texts have, up to the present day, fulfilled a pedagogical function, whose oppressive nature diminishes and at times cancels out entirely the joy which ever since Homer was considered as one of the immediate aims of poetry. Consequently, this pedagogical obsession in educational circles has made classical texts appear as something to be avoided at all costs rather than something capable of giving enjoyment.

No matter how things are perceived, the truth is that the conventional distinction between philological and literary translation is contradicted by the convergent senses of the two terms. In other words, if to be a philologist (*φιλόλογος*) means to be a friend (*φίλος*) of oral or written discourse (*λόγος*) and if to be a person of literature (*λογοτέχνης*) means to be a skilled artisan (*τεχνίτης* from *τέχνη*) of that same discourse then it is worthwhile pondering for a moment whether one attribute can really exist independently of the other. At the risk of oversimplifying, we may say that the dogmatic privileging of pedagogical translation at the exclusion of any other approach usually points to a less than talented philologist, whereas the opposite usually points to a literary person who is, shall we say, 'philologically challenged'. Therefore, even if we accept that the two terms do not exactly coincide semantically, we must nevertheless reach the conclusion that there is a way to reconcile any difference between them. Such a reconciliation would vie with the inaugurative paradigm of the Hellenistic times, when philology and literature were considered complementary disciplines, both of which were often practised by the same person. A characteristic example of this state of affairs was Callimachus, the most renowned poet of the Hellenistic era and at the same time a philologist, the first one in fact to organize the material at the famous library of Alexandria.²¹

The three dilemmas that we mentioned above and which are in fact the three forms of a single dilemma have another negative feature. In reality, they do not recognize the gradual nature of the process of translation and therefore they are

²¹ Pfeiffer (1972) 147.

unable to account for the peculiarities of the different phases of the whole endeavour. It was George Steiner²² that defined and defended this gradation of the process of translation in real-life situations. Steiner suggested four consecutive levels: the first is 'trust', then there is 'aggression', followed by 'incorporation', which finally leads to 'restitution'. In so far as modern Greek intralingual translation is concerned it is the level of 'aggression' that we must single out, especially if we consider it in terms of the antagonism between the source and the target language, an antagonism that springs from the latter's attempts at gaining trust for its contested competence, as we remarked earlier on.

Steiner's model, comprehensive though it may be, leaves one question unanswered, namely whether there exists a specific and identifiable form of translation that corresponds to each of the four stages. The answer to this question would provide a basis for the actual procedure according to which translation proceeds from its preliminary and still imperfect forms to its more complete and final form. This, let us say hypothetical, theoretical deficit is made good by the following, complementary thesis which considers translation as being articulated along three levels, to each of which corresponds a specific form of translation. The first form is the 'heteronomous translation' (*ετερόνομη μετάφραση*), then there is the intermediary form of the translation on an equal footing with the original, which we may venture to call 'egalitarian translation' (*ισόνομη μετάφραση*), and finally there is the 'autonomous translation' (*αυτόνομη μετάφραση*).

The heteronomous translation, fully accepts, as its name suggests, its dependence on all the aspects of the original (linguistic, syntactic, stylistic), which it attempts to emulate to the best of its ability. This type of translation is put forward as a model and it is consequently practised in schools, as a form of initiation to ancient Greek language and literature. For its part the egalitarian translation keeps a balance between the imperatives of the source and the target language and presents its own text along with the original as an evidence of this equivalence of languages. This type of translation is preferred by the majority of the editors of various Classical Series, which are destined for academic use but also for an informed lay audience that wishes to witness for itself to what extent, if at all, there is a correspondence between source and target language, between the original text and its translation.

Finally, autonomous translation, by taking into consideration whatever stands out in the other two types, proceeds in its complete emancipation (extending as far as the typography itself) from the original text. In doing so it demands the recognition of the target text's linguistic and literary autonomy, this being the reason it enters the corpus of a new literature, while at the same

²² Steiner (1992) 313–435.

time retaining all its distinctive features *qua* translation, especially when compared with current literary texts. Famous translations, recent as well as older, of classical Greek texts both within and outside Greece were of this type.

When it comes to education (particularly secondary and tertiary), where ancient Greek language and literature are taught as either intralingual or interlingual subjects, the two following types of translation pedagogy have been proved to be, in actual practice and from an educational perspective, very amenable to the exigencies of teaching. In so far as the one type is concerned, we have the substitution of oral translation for the written one, the former taking place in the classroom with students collaborating with their tutors. These translations are compared with each other and, of course, with the original text. In so far as the other type is concerned, we have the opting out of a comprehensive translation and instead the opting for another approach, according to which the identification of the textual/literary genre and the typological classification of original microtexts take precedence, so as later to facilitate, through their reworking, the identification of their basic meaning and the mode of their codified articulation. Such a translation exercise is privileged when the objects of comparison are microtexts that belong to the same genre, for instance the prefaces of historiographic texts (of Hecataeus, Herodotus, and Thucydides for instance), within which students are encouraged to look for and eventually identify certain keywords: the author's name, the work's title, the reason behind the writing of the work, its aim, and its methodology. In this case, the similarities and, more importantly, the differences among the uses and the modes of articulation of these formal signs facilitate the drawing of a set of general conclusions regarding the specific authorial choices inscribed in the texts on the one hand and the development of the particular literary genre on the other.

MUTUAL HOSPITALITY

The various types of translation (interlingual and intralingual, oral and written, philological and literary, heteronomous and autonomous) are conditioned by and large by their initial set of assumptions regarding the issue of distance between source and target language, between original and translated text. Each type makes its own assumptions about this distance, but the fact remains that they all create a gap that remains unbridgeable. The degree of familiarity or lack thereof of the two languages that come in contact in the act of translation is directly proportionate to the length of this distance and the degree of (linguistic) difference. The intermediate space as well as the intermediate time that

separate both the two languages (the source and the target language) and the respective texts are crucially important for the precise identification of the aforementioned distance, difference, and degree of familiarity. In other words, the greater the space and the longer the time that separate the two languages and texts the less translation is likely to be successful.

However, both interlingual and intralingual translation effect a transposition of the original from the familiarity of its space-time to the foreignness of their own space-time by overcoming all the obstacles (linguistic, semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic) that stand in the way. It is exactly this target-orientedness of translation that is implied by the established terminology of 'source' and 'target' languages, which, it must be noted, introduces a war metaphor in order to articulate the relation of the two languages, thus running the risk of obscuring the true nature of such a relationship. Of course, we can always accept that the opposite is true, such as it was defended by Friedrich Schleiermacher in his classic study published in 1813,²³ where it was argued that the legitimate aim of any translational choice or act is none other than their recourse to the fundamental, constitutive elements of the source text. This view is rather similar to the second level of Steiner's typology, namely 'aggression'.

In contradistinction to these two extreme positions, there is, as we have argued, a third, intermediary position, according to which the two languages engaged in the translation process are coming together and through this meeting give translation the opportunity to give birth to a new text. Put differently, instead of us imagining the two languages constantly engaged in a struggle, we hold the view that their respective differences become gradually effaced, leading to the possibility of a final reconciliation between them. This approach leads to the transformation of the initial mutual estrangement to a final mutual acceptance. This means that the two languages engaged in the translation process, as well as the respective texts, are at one and the same time both subject and object of a process of foreignization. In this state their foreignness assumes the role of a welcoming host while still retaining its essential nature.

In so far as intralingual translation in the context of modern Greek culture is concerned, all the aforementioned points of tension between source and target languages appear to be less threatening, while at the same time there are significantly more points of interaction and mutual acceptance. The reason for this is the ordinary relation of target (modern Greek) and source language (ancient Greek). This relation is often considered to be a total, or, at worst, a partial identity between each language's basic vocabulary. This widespread

²³ Schleiermacher (1963).

view seems to have affected even the specialized terminology used in modern Greek so that we have the technical word ‘μετάφραση’ (*metafrasi* = translation) replaced by other more familiar terms. That is why George Seferis called his intralingual translation work ‘μεταγραφή’ (*metagrafi* = transcription)²⁴ and Odysseus Elytis called his own intralingual translation work either ‘μορφή στα νέα ελληνικά’ (*morfi sta nea ellinika* = a modern Greek form) (of his translations of the Book of Revelation and Krinagoras) or ‘ανασύνθεση και απόδοση’ (*anasinthesi kai apodosi* = recomposition and rendering) (of his translation of Sappho).

There is however a crucial question that needs an answer: do the perceived similarities between ancient and modern Greek have a positive or negative effect on the quality of intralingual translations? It is our opinion that both effects are in play here. Whenever the linguistic affinities between the two languages are defended in a manner which implies that, in the process of reasoning, passion has taken absolute precedence over reason, then the negative effects are considerably more than the positive ones. On the contrary, whenever an effort is made to identify not only similarities that point to the deeper homology between the two languages, but also their multiple differences, then the outcome is positive. On the question of the differences between the two languages, we may note that the most important are: words that have become obsolete; the mutation of many phonemes (consonants as well as vowels and diphthongs, the last having changed into monophthongs); the prosodic changes that took the form of the shift from pitch to stress accent; the modifications of the declensional system of both nouns and verbs; the gradual simplification or even disappearance of significantly more complex syntactical and stylistic norms.

It is in these terms, that we may view intralingual translation as an idiosyncratic but generous host, who welcomes the two language-guests under her own roof. In other words, if hospitality is defined as the coming together of two strangers, then a certain foreignness is vital for there to be any chance of intralingual hospitality performing its duties as a host with success.²⁵ If this foreignness is suppressed then the translated text will hardly do any justice to the singularity of the original, which, of course, is another way of saying that the translated text can negotiate successfully its own inherent tensions only under the condition that what is its own and thereby familiar and what is foreign to it and thereby unfamiliar are both capable of coexisting and interacting with each other. We may then say that what is exchanged during

²⁴ Seferis (1980).

²⁵ See also Berman (1992) 154–5 and Venuti (1995) 20–1, 39–42, who both present arguments similar to ours.

a translation is, in essence, something akin to the gifts exchanged in antiquity between host and guest. At this point, I would like to engage with my own adventure with the translation of Homer's *Odyssey*²⁶ so that I may present certain examples of this interaction, which takes the form of 'receiving' and 'offering gifts'.

The first example is related to exchanges of rhythmic patterns. The Homeric text is written in dactylic hexameter, a metre that cannot be reproduced in modern Greek. In view of this the opting for a traditional modern Greek verse form, such as the iambic decapentasyllable, or even the iambic seventeen-syllable verse was deemed inappropriate. Having decided at the outset that the modernist language of literature (or more specifically poetry) would serve me as the means for translating Homer, I consequently decided to choose free verse as the poetic form more suitable for that purpose. I did this for three reasons: (1) so that the target text would not suffocate under the strict rules of classical metrics, (2) so that the inner rhythm and texture of the Homeric original be allowed to come to the fore (one could include here the rhythmic patterns that emerge through the alternation of dactyls and spondees, of oligosyllabic and polysyllabic words, of closed and open vowels, of isometric verses and run-on lines etc.), and (3) so that the translation would allow the distinctive, mood-setting tone of each rhapsody to register itself as clearly as possible, given that, for instance, there is a certain implied mood in the fifth rhapsody where the shipwreck of Odysseus's ship is recounted and a quite different implied mood in the next rhapsody where we come across the emotionally charged exchange between Odysseus and Nausicaa.

The second example is related to two defining elements of the narrative technique used in archaic epics and particularly in the *Odyssey*. The first technique has to do with the form of third-person narration which envelops, as it were, the entire narrative and which remains from the beginning to the end unbroken, assuming different postures and rhythms of movement, very much in the manner of a serpent, always in accordance with the twists and turns of the plot. Every narrative element, such as dialogues and monologues, is then subsumed under this form, which, by its constant movement, controls even the most unruly parts of the narrative. So, whatever is recounted by the epic poet is kept under control, giving the impression of a certain containment of emotions, something that vies with the sensitivities of the audience, which were, in any case, what the archaic epic was concerned with. It is this basic narrative technique that the Homeric text bequeaths to its modern translation, and the target text, in its turn, forgoes the somewhat theatrical excesses of modern narratives by welcoming the imposition of those narrative

²⁶ Maronitis (2006).

constraints. Another characteristic of the original Homeric text has to do with its variable ‘emotional temperature’, a feature that allows it to avoid both expressive coldness and the overflow of uncontrollable emotions. It is this expressive variability that must find expression in the translation as well.

The third example I would like to offer is related to the translational reception of Homeric epithets and similes. It is widely known that Homeric epithets, either in their simpler nominal forms (adjective and noun) or in their more complex sentential forms (where they run across a whole line of verse or more) are a constant source of embarrassment for translators. If, however, we accept that Homeric epithets and similes are impressive innovations of epic poetry, whose value far exceeds their metrical function, then we must also accept that the duty of any translation to find the most felicitous renderings of them becomes even greater. In this case, the difficulties that arise are many but we, as translators, can do little more than try constantly to negotiate with them. Allow me then to present, without any further comments, three of my attempts at such a negotiation: the frequently found expression ‘γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη’ has been rendered as ‘ἡ Αθηνά, τα μάτια λάμποντας’ (Athina, with its glowing eyes); the expression ‘πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς’, which, by and large, is the second hemistich of the hexametrical verse that contains it, has been rendered as ‘βασανισμένος ο Οδυσσεάς και θείος’ (the divine and long-suffering Odysseus); and lastly, the complex expression ‘καί μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα’ has been rendered as ‘ὕστερα την προσφώνησε μιλώντας|και πέταξαν τα λόγια τον σαν τα πονλιά (then he addressed her in words | which flew away like birds).

The fourth example I would like to offer is the following: we know that in Homeric epics the name of the poet, and even the mere mention of his existence, is absent from the narrative. At times, it is referenced implicitly through the use of a personal pronoun in either singular or plural number. Obviously, this ‘effacement’ of the poetic I conforms to the conventions of the archaic epic, conventions which gradually lost their normative powers as was made evident some years later in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (22 ff.) where the poet introduces himself, albeit in the third person. However, as far as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are concerned, the poet remains unknown, something which he achieves by putting forward the Muse as the one who recounts the events through the use of the third-person narration. In other words, what the poet does here is to abstain from laying any proprietary claims for his own narrative, instead transferring these rights of property to a god. This act of abstinence that is one of the dominant characteristics of the source text, formal though it may be, must find its equivalence in the target text, which is another way of saying that the identity of the known translator must always be suppressed so that the reader may have a sense of the translator’s self-effacement instead of his arrogance.

The fifth, and last, example I would like to offer is the following: the *Odyssey* is an epic of a complex, multivalent character in so far as narrative art and technique are concerned. It is constructed in two temporal levels, where the narrated past is inserted into and framed by the poetic present. It organizes itself internally by revolving around three spaces, three islands: the exotic Ogygia, the utopian Scheria, and the 'political' Ithaca. It combines imaginary, monster motifs with scenes portrayed in a very realistic manner. It oscillates between verisimilitude and veridicality, between artificiality and originality so much that certain episodes and personages are presented in the most ambiguous manner. It transforms, through the use of irony, the finiteness of Odysseus's return home into a new outward-directed adventure so that the narrative closure of the myth of Odysseus is deferred. However, it must be noted that this narrative multivalence, which transforms the *Odyssey* into a proper narrative panorama, does nevertheless flow naturally, without so much as even a trace of artistic affectedness or any other sign that would point to the amount of labour put in its construction. This is a gift that any translation must reciprocate in a similar gesture, still giving the impression that everything in this (new) instance is controlled by an invisible hand, which makes everything that is difficult look easy. This is precisely what calls for the listener/reader to take part in the struggle by assuming the burden of translation himself.

Translated by Yorgos Agoustis.

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Translating Aeschylean Choral Lyric: Agamemnon 367–474

Seth L. Schein

INTRODUCTION: TRANSLATION AND PEDAGOGY

My thoughts on translating Greek tragedy, in particular Aeschylean choral lyric, spring mainly from my experience teaching the plays in translation for nearly four decades and translating Sophocles' *Philoktetes*, and now the *Oresteia*, for Focus Classical Library. My translations are intended for students, teachers, and other non-specialists, but most of their readers will be undergraduates, and the ideas I develop in this chapter are grounded in considerations of pedagogical utility. There are many other kinds and purposes of translation, but I am concerned primarily with translating for the classroom.

The pedagogy of literature in translation involves two related problems having to do with translation itself: on the one hand, as Lawrence Venuti has pointed out, there is an ever-increasing 'dependency' in British and American schools, colleges, and universities 'on translated texts in curricula and research' and a simultaneous tendency, 'in both teaching and publications, to elide the status of translated texts as translated, to treat them as texts originally written in the translating language'.¹ This is particularly true in the study of literature, and Venuti shows how translators of literary works, in the interest of fluency, transparency, and readability, often 'domesticate' the original text to the stylistic norms and values of standard English. In the process, they frequently alter the original by reducing or eliminating nuance, awkwardness, connotation, ambiguity, and other kinds of polysemy. Thus they limit what is linguistically, culturally, and historically distinctive and so transform a work created in one language and literature into a work belonging to another. For example, a work originally composed in ancient Greek becomes, in effect, a work of contemporary English or American literature.²

¹ Venuti (1998) 88–105, at 89.

² Venuti (1995) 17–39; (1998) 81–7.

The second, related problem raised by the pedagogy of literature in translation should perhaps be considered the obverse of the first: how can one translate so as to avoid such domestication and preserve what is linguistically, culturally, and historically distinctive in the original? How does one achieve a ‘foreignizing’ rather than a ‘domesticating’ translation that will be accurate and readable in English, but also encourage students and other readers to bear in mind that the work they are reading comes from another language, culture, time, and place? How does a translator help students learn to respect the otherness of a foreign text and a foreign culture, even as they are reading in their own language?

When I teach any literary work in translation, I try to teach students to read critically and self-critically, to do literary interpretation themselves with pleasure and understanding grounded in a sense of the work both in its own cultural and historical context and as a work meaningful today. In the case of Attic tragedy, where my own understanding is grounded in close familiarity with a poet’s language, rhetoric, metre, and style, I want students to be able to work with a translation that preserves (or conveys) these features of the original as well as possible, a version that is as close to the idiom and structure of the Greek as I can make it without utterly sacrificing readability. This is what I aimed for in my *Philoctetes* and what I hope to provide in my translation-in-progress of the *Oresteia*. I don’t try, à la Hölderlin, to ‘write Greek in [English]’. I just want students and other interested readers to be able to analyse and interpret what they’re reading, *mutatis mutandis*, as I do the Greek, so they can achieve their own close familiarity with the play and its complex meanings. Despite inevitable awkwardness and the impossibility of bringing over into English everything that I see in the Greek, this kind of translation seems to me pedagogically desirable. The risk, of course, is that the result may be off-putting to students, thus defeating my purposes. Only rarely, as in the recent *Oedipus at Colonus* by Eamon Grennan and Rachel Kitzinger, can one find the highest scholarly and poetic qualities in a translation that is just right pedagogically.³

I do what I can to make my translation readable and engaging, while keeping as close to the Greek as possible. In the case of Aeschylus, however, I don’t want it to be too readable, because it should have an intellectual and emotional effect on readers similar to the effect of the original on me, and part of that effect is the sheer difficulty of Aeschylean Greek, especially the choral odes. One of the best things about Richmond Lattimore’s *Oresteia* is that it sounds and feels like Aeschylus, which is to say that sometimes I don’t know exactly what is being said, but I know it is significant, even profound.⁴ To make a translation of the *Oresteia* too easily readable and comprehensible would be to domesticate the text and would, in this way, be false to the Greek.

³ Grennan and Kitzinger (2004).

⁴ Lattimore (1959).

I would not, of course, claim that a translation as close to the Greek as I can make it is the most worthwhile or best kind of translation, only the most effective pedagogically, given my particular aims in the classroom. In my experience, it can discourage students and undermine their confidence in the text and in their own ability to read with pleasure and understanding, if they comment on a particular passage or produce a general interpretation of the text, and I respond, ‘Yes, but what it really says is...’. Students certainly should know that being able to read in the original language is important, and that reading in translation is like seeing through a glass darkly, but I don’t want that knowledge to inhibit them from seeing as well as possible under the circumstances and from generating their own valid interpretations. I want them to be confident that precisely because the translation they are using is accurate, their readings have validity.

There is never enough time to discuss everything in class, so I provide an introduction that situates the play, however briefly, in its historical, cultural, social, intellectual, religious, and political contexts, with particular emphasis on the conditions of its original theatrical production and reception. I also include in my translation brief stage directions based on archaeological and historical knowledge of the theatre of Dionysos, on the little we know of ancient performance practice, and on indications in the text of the location and movement of characters. In the light of Oliver Taplin’s *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus*,⁵ I try to be scrupulous about noting exits and entrances, even though it is often unclear just when a character (such as Klutaimestra in *Agamemnon* or Apollo in *Eumenides*) comes or goes, so that a stage direction is often no more than an interpretation, an example of my own response to the text. In a translation addressed primarily to students, I think that brief notes at the foot of the page also help, not only by glossing unfamiliar names and providing relevant factual information, but by offering interpretative guidance—for example, by transliterating and commenting on key or recurrent Greek words and noting unusual features of dramaturgy, rhetoric, metre, and style. Thus in my notes to the Prologue of *Philoctetes* I explain, among other things, what Lemnos and Malis are; track the movements of Odysseus and Neoptolemos; point out and suggest a reason for the awkward syntax in 54 ff.; transliterate and comment on the Greek originals of the cluster of words and phrases including 14 ‘clever plan’, 77 ‘be clever’, 80 ‘contrive’, 119 ‘clever’, and 131 ‘what is advantageous’; quote the scholiast on Sophocles’ slandering Athenian political leaders in 96–9; mention the significance of the duals at 25, 133, and elsewhere in the play.⁶ (Finally, I offer students an interpretative essay, to be read after they read the play, which refers frequently

⁵ Taplin (1977).

⁶ Schein (2003) 19–26.

to the translation and can, I hope, serve as a point of departure for their own interpretations without my telling them what to think.

CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION

With this in mind, I turn to the specific challenges of translating Aeschylean choral poetry. To illustrate these challenges I've chosen *Agamemnon* 367–474, the three strophes and antistrophes of the first stasimon. This passage, which does not include the closing epode, is representative of Aeschylean choral lyric in its mix of a high style with some colloquialisms. It is, however, easier than many choral passages in Aeschylus, because of its relatively certain text, its comparatively straightforward grammar and syntax, and its clear metrical form.⁷

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Διὸς πλαγὰν ἔχουσιν εἰπεῖν, | στρ.α |
| πάρεστιν τοῦτό γ' ἔξιχνεύσαι. | |
| ἔπραξαν ὡς ἔκρανεν. οὐκ ἔφα τις | |
| θεοὺς βροτῶν ἀξιοῦσθαι μέλειν | 370 |
| ὅσοις ἀθίκτων χάρις | |
| πατοῖθ'. ὁ δ' οὐκ εὐσεβής. | |
| πέφονται ἔγγόνους | |
| ἀτολήτων ἄρη† | 375 |
| πνεόντων μείζον ἢ δικαίως, | |
| φλεόντων δωμάτων ὑπέρφεν | |
| ὑπὲρ τὸ βέλτιστον. ἔστω δ' ἀπή- | |
| μαντον ὥστ' ἀπαρκεῖν | |
| εὖ πραπίδων λαχόντι. | 380 |
| οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἔπαλξις | |
| πλούτου πρὸς κόρον ἀνδρὶ | |
| λακτίσαντι μέγαν Δίκας | |
| βωμὸν εἰς ἀφάνειαν. | |
| βιάται δ' ἀτάλαινα Πειθῶ, | ἀντ.α |
| προβούλου παῖς ἄφερτος Ἄτας. | 386 |
| ἄκος δὲ πᾶν μάταιον. οὐκ ἐκρύφθη, | |
| πρέπει δέ, φῶς αἰνολαμπές, σίνος· | |
| κακοῦ δὲ χαλκοῦ τρόπον | |
| τρίβωι τε καὶ προσβολαῖς | 390 |
| μελαμπαγῆς πέλει | |

⁷ My Greek text is basically that of E. Fraenkel (1962) i. 112–18, except for Blomfield's *φῶτα* Δίκας for *φῶτ' ἄδικον* in 398 and Dobree's *ὑπαδοῦς'* for *ὀπάδοις* in 426. My translation occasionally borrows a word or two from Fraenkel, Lattimore (1959) 46–9, Lloyd-Jones (1970) 37–42, and Collard (2002) 12–15.

- δικαιωθείς, ἔπει
διώκει παῖς ποτανὸν ὄρνιν,
πόλει πρόστριμμα θεὸς ἄφερτον· 395
λιτᾶν δ' ἀκούει μὲν οὔτις θεῶν,
τὸν δ' ἐπίστροφον τῶν
φῶτα Δίκα καθαιρεῖ.
οἶος καὶ Πάρις ἐλλῶν
ἔς δόμον τὸν Ἀτρειδᾶν 400
ἦισχυνε ξενίαν τράπε-
ζαν κλοπαῖσι γυναικός.
λιποῦσα δ' ἀστοῖσιν ἀπίστορας στρ.β
κλόρους λοχισμούς τε καὶ ναυβάτος ὀπλισμούς, 405
ἄγουσά τ' ἀντίφερνον Ἰλίῳ φθορὰν
βεβάκει ῥίμφα διὰ
πυλᾶν, ἄτλατα τλάσα· πολλὰ δ' ἔστενον
τόδ' ἐνέποντες δόμων προφήται·
ἰώ, ἰὼ δῶμα δῶμα καὶ πρόμοι, 410
ἰὼ λέχος καὶ στίβοι φιλόνορες.
πάρεστι σιγὰς ἀτίμους ἀλοιδόρους ἀπί-
στους ἀφειμένων ἰδεῖν.
πόθωι δ' ὑπερποντίας 415
φάσμα δόξει δόμων ἀνάσσειν.
εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν
ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρῖ·
ὀμμάτων δ' ἐν ἀχηνίαις
ἔρρει πᾶσ' Ἀφροδίτα.
ὄνειρόφαντοι δέπεινθήμονες 420
πάρεισι δόξαι φέρουσαι χάριν ματαίαν· 421
μάταν γάρ, εἶτ' ἂν ἐσθλά τις δοκῶν ὄρᾶν,
παραλλάξασα διὰ
χερῶν βέβακεν ὄψις, οὐ μεθύστερον 425
περοῖς ὀπαδοῦς ὕπνου κελεύθους·
τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους ἐφ' ἐστίας ἄχη
τάδ' ἐστὶ καὶ τῶνδ' ὑπερβατώτερα·
τὸ πᾶν δ' ἀφ' Ἑλλανος αἴας συνορμῆνοισι πέν-
θεια τλησικάρδιος 430
δόμοις ἐκάστου πρέπει·
πολλὰ γοῦν θιγγάνει πρὸς ἦπαρ·
οὓς μὲν γάρ (τις) ἔπεμψεν
οἶδεν, ἀντὶ δὲ φωτῶν
τεύχη καὶ σποδὸς εἰς ἐκά- 435
στου δόμους ἀφικνεῖται.
ὁ χρυσαμοιβὸς δ' Ἄρης σωματῶν 440
στρ. γ

| | |
|--|--------------|
| καὶ ταλαντοῦχος ἐν μάχῃ δορὸς πυρωθὲν ἐξ Ἰλίου | 440 |
| φίλοισι πέμπει βαρὺ ψῆγμα δυσδάκρυτον, ἀντήγορος σποδοῦ γεμίζων λέβητας εὐθέτους. στένουσι δ' εὖ λέγοντες ἄν- | 445 |
| δρα τὸν μὲν ὡς μάχης ἴδρις, τὸν δ' ἐν φοναῖς καλῶς πεσόντ' ἄλλοτρίαις διαὶ γυναικός. τάδε σίγά τις βαῦζει, φθονερὸν δ' ὑπ' ἄλγος ἔρπει | 450 |
| προδίκους Ἀτρείδαις. οἱ δ' αὐτοῦ περὶ τείχος θήκας Ἰλιάδος γᾶς εὐμορφοὶ κατέχουσιν· ἔχ- | 455 |
| θρὰ δ' ἔχοντας ἔκρυψεν. | |
| βαρεῖα δ' ἀστῶν φάτις σὺν κότῳ· δημοκράντου δ' ἀρᾶς τίνει χρέος. μένει δ' ἀκούσαι τί μοι μέριμνα νυκτηρεφές. | ἀντ.γ 460 |
| τῶν πολυκτόνων γὰρ οὐκ ἄσκοποι θεοί· κελαιναὶ δ' Ἑρινύες χρόνῳ τυχηρὸν ὄντ' ἄνευ δίκας παλιτυχεῖ τριβᾶι βίου | 465 |
| τιθείς' ἀμαυρόν, ἐν δ' αἰ- στοῖς τελέθοντος οὔτις ἀλκά. τὸ δ' ὑπερκόπως κλύειν εὖ βαρὺ· βάλλεται γὰρ ὄσσοις Διόθεν κεραυνός. | 470 |
| κρίνω δ' ἄφθονον ὄλβον· μήτ' εἴην πτολιπόρθης, μήτ' ὄν αὐτὸς ἀλούς ὑπ' ἄλ- λων βίον κατίδοιμι. | |

Strophe A

The stroke of Zeus is theirs to speak of;
this, at least, can be fully traced.
He did as he decreed. Someone denied
the gods deign to concern themselves
with those among mortals
who trample the grace of things
not to be touched; that man was impious.

Translating Aeschylean Choral Lyric 393

It has been revealed to the children's children 375
of men breathing a pride more great than just,
of houses abounding excessively
beyond what is best: may that which
does no harm suffice
the man whose lot is a sensible mind. 380
There is no defence in wealth
against wealth's surfeit, for a man
who has kicked the great altar
of Justice into invisibility.

Antistrophe A

Relentless Persuasion is overpowering, 385
purposive Ruin's irresistible child.
Every cure is futile. The damage was not hidden
but is conspicuous, a grim-shining light;
in the manner of base bronze 390
by rubbing and beatings he becomes
a fixed, indelible black
when justly judged; for
a child chases a winged bird,
imposing on his city an irresistible affliction. 395
No god hears his prayers,
but Justice takes down the unjust man
who turns to these things.
Such in fact was Paris, when he came
to the house of the sons of Atreus 400
and shamed his host's table
by stealing his wife.

Strophe B

Leaving behind for citizens the confused turmoil
of soldiers with shields, of companies forming and 405
naval armaments,
and bringing to Troy, instead of a dowry, destruction,
she was gone, stepping lightly through the gates,
daring what is not to be dared. With many a groan
the prophets of the house spoke with cries of pain:
'The house, the house and the leaders, 410
the bed and its imprint, dear to the husband.
The silence is there to see—dishonoured, disbelieving,

unreproachful—of those abandoned.
 Through longing for her beyond the sea,
 a phantom will seem to rule the house. 415
 The grace of shapely statues
 is hateful to the husband,
 and in the vacancy of eyes
 all Aphrodite is gone.

Antistrophe B

Dream appearances, images of mourning, 420
 will come bringing a grace that is futile;
 for futilely, when a man imagines he sees something good,
 the vision, swerving through his arms, is gone—not, in the future,
 keeping him company on sleep's winged pathways.' 425
 These are the sorrows at the hearth
 within the house—and others surpassing these;
 in general, for those setting off together from the land of Greece,
 a mourning woman with an enduring heart 430
 is conspicuous in each man's home.
 Much, at any rate, touches the heart:
 They know those whom
 they sent forth, but instead of men
 urns and ashes arrive 435
 at each man's home.

Strophe C

Ares, trafficker in the gold of bodies
 and holding his balance in the battle of spears, 440
 sends what has been burned and refined by fire,
 to the families from Troy—
 heavy gold-dust, bitterly bewept—loading
 well-packed cauldrons with ash in place of men.
 They groan and praise one man 445
 as knowing in battle, another
 fallen beautifully in slaughter—
 'for the sake of another man's wife'.
 This they mutter in silence,
 and over them steals pain full of resentment 450
 against the sons of Atreus, advocates of justice.
 Others there close to the wall
 in their shapely beauty occupy

graves in the hated Trojan earth
that covers its conquerors. 455

Antistrophe C

Heavy with anger is the citizens' talk;
it pays the debt of a democratic curse.
There remains for me anxiety—to hear
what is covered in night. 460
For the gods are not unaware
of those who kill many; the dark Furies,
reversing fortune, in time rub out the life
of a man fortunate without justice, darken his light; 465
there is no defence when he ends among the unseen.
To have excessive glory is
a burden; for Zeus' eyes
throw Zeus' thunderbolts. 470
I choose unresented prosperity;
may I neither be a sacker of cities
nor, myself taken captive, see
my life subject to others.

The first and foremost challenge in translating Aeschylean choral lyric is the frequent uncertainty (at least my frequent uncertainty) about just what Greek I should be translating and what the words mean individually as well as in context. Aeschylean choruses can be highly corrupt textually, especially in the *Oresteia* and *Suppliant Women*, where the MS tradition is thinnest. To translate the choruses of these plays often means working with a text that is no better than doubtful, and making decisions that inevitably go against the opinions of some of the greatest Greek scholars who ever lived. Sometimes, when a text seems irremediably corrupt, I simply skip a few words, as in 374–5, where I really don't know what is being said; other times, I translate what seems to be the general meaning and indicate in a note that both wording and sense are uncertain, and in such cases I frequently change my mind about both text and translation.

For example, my initial translation of 430–1... *πένθεια τλησικάρδιος | δόμοις ἐκάστου πρέπει*, was 'a feeling of enduring sorrow | is conspicuous in each man's home'. Though based on the text of the two relevant MSS, a *scholion*, and a generally approved emendation by Auratus, this text and translation contradict the judgement of Fraenkel and West, among others, who would accept Blass' emendation, *ἀπένθεια*, 'non-mourning' in place of *πένθεια*, either of which would be *ἄπαξ λεγόμενον*.⁸ When I made my initial translation, I took *πένθεια* as the equivalent of the scholiast's *πένθησις* (itself a

⁸ Fraenkel (1962) i. 115, cf. ii. 224–5; West (1990) 212.

ἄπαξ λεγόμενον), ‘mourning’. Now I think that it’s probably best to follow Murray and understand πένθεια as ‘a mourning woman.’⁹ Thus my translation now reads, ‘a mourning woman with an enduring heart | is conspicuous in each man’s home.’ I find that I am constantly changing my mind in this way. Another example is at 420, where I wavered between πενθήμονες, the reading of the MSS, and Housman’s πειθήμονες, each with its own appeal, but in the end made my usual decision to follow the MSS where they make sense. I can’t imagine that anyone can edit or translate Aeschylus without going back and forth between such alternatives.

There also are instances where a text and translation seem certain, but the specific meaning or reference of a word or two is ambiguous or unclear. In such cases I try to make my foreignizing English as open and indeterminate as the Greek. In 416–19, for example, ‘The grace of shapely statues | is hateful to the husband, | and in the vacancy of eyes | all Aphrodite is gone’, seems an adequate translation of εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν | ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρί, | ὀμμάτων δ’ ἐν ἀχηνίαις | ἔρρει πᾶσ’ Ἀφροδίτα, even though I’m not certain just whose eyes are vacant and what the relation is between that vacancy and the ‘the grace of shapely statues.’¹⁰

A second fundamental problem for a translator of Aeschylean choral poetry is the absence of the music and choreography that were an integral part of the original odes and that, if they survived, would help to constitute and communicate their formal structure, which for us is suggested mainly by the respiration or metrical agreement between strophe and antistrophe, and would heighten the emotional effect of the language and metre. The absence of music and dance is, of course, a problem posed by all extant Greek choral poetry. This problem is particularly acute in Aeschylus, because his plays, except for *Prometheus Bound*, have a much higher percentage of choral poetry relative to dialogue than do the plays of Sophocles and Euripides.¹¹ Since the word ‘chorus’ means, in the first place, a group of dancers (cf. χορεύω, etc.), στροφή and ἀντιστροφή, ‘turn’ and ‘counterturn’, must originally have been dance-terms. But we know next to nothing about the dancing of choral odes, not even whether it was representational or abstract or a combination of both. Nevertheless, I think it is important for a translator to visualize in the mind’s eye some kind of movement that might accompany the words on the page. This helps to give the translated lyrics a rhythm, for want of a better word, that can animate them in a way analogous to the way they were animated in performance. Personally, I find it hard not to think in terms of Martha

⁹ Murray (1955) 224, comparing βασιλεια and ἴερα.

¹⁰ Cf. my version of *Philoctetes* 852–4, ‘If you hold the same thought as this man, | the sufferings to see in this are insoluble even for those who are subtle’, which tries to reproduce the uncertainties of εἰ ταῦτ’ ἀν τούτῳ γινώμην ἴσχεις, | μάλα τοι ἄπορα πυκνοῖς ἐνιδεῖν πάθη.

¹¹ Schein (1979) 35 n. 2.

Graham-like movements and gestures, since her *Clytemnestra* and other dance versions of Greek myths are so compelling. I try through forceful alliteration in my translation and the introduction of dactyls and anapests into a basically iambo-trochaic English metre, to convey the restlessness and anxiety of Aeschylus' syncopated iambo-trochaic metre.

Many recent translators choose not to demarcate strophes, antistrophes, and epodes, but I think this effaces the most fundamental and significant formal feature of the original. Therefore, clumsy and graphically intrusive though it may seem, I label strophes, antistrophes, and epodes in bold font, as I do anapests, trimeters, and tetrameters in spoken portions of the play, to remind readers of the metrical formalism that characterizes Aeschylean lyric, and of the specific formal structure of each stasimon as a discrete unit. I also indicate, either through my translation or by the visual layout of the page, the metrical variety of the original. For example, in the first and third strophes and antistrophes of the first stasimon of *Agamemnon*, there is a shift in the final four lines from the mainly iambo-trochaic metre of the rest of the stanza to aeolic metre, and in the second strophe and antistrophe the metre modulates from iambo-trochaic through ionic to aeolic. I have not changed the English metre in just these ways, but I have tried to indicate the distinctive nature of these clausulae by indenting the final four lines and then further indenting to show that the third and fourth lines of each four-line sequence constitute a single unit—in Greek, a typical glyconic-pherecratean clausula. And given the marriage-associations of the glyconic-pherecratean, I translate 417 ἀνδρί as 'husband' rather than 'man', which in any case makes sense after 411 στίβοι φίλάνορες 'the imprint dear to the husband'.¹² One thing I do not attempt is to translate lyric passages into the original metres, using stressed and unstressed syllables in English for heavy and light syllables in the Greek. I admire the versions of the first *stasimon* by Mark Edwards¹³ and Richmond Lattimore¹⁴ who attempt such 'symmetrical' translations, but I think that Edwards, who is stricter than Lattimore, is forced into using too many monosyllables and too much archaic diction. Along with frequent alliteration, this sometimes gives his translation the feel of Anglo-Saxon verse, and both Edwards and Lattimore end up with English that in places is not as close to the Greek as I would prefer. The advantage of a symmetrical translation is that—at least with appropriate commentary—it can help make a reader aware of the metrical complexity of the Greek, but in this case I do not think that the loss in diction and readability are worth the gain, especially since whatever

¹² On the marriage-associations of the glyconic-pherecratean sequence, see Edwards (2002) 83.

¹³ *Ibid.* 81–7.

¹⁴ Lattimore (1956) 46–8.

syllabic ‘heaviness’ and ‘lightness’ in Greek verse might actually be, they are something quite different from the different levels of stress in English. The most successful English translation of *Agamemnon*, by the well-known poet and Hellenist Louis MacNeice,¹⁵ manages to be both remarkably accurate and metrically readable. MacNeice uses mostly iambic or trochaic English metre, and successfully brings over from the Greek such stylistic effects as enjambment and unusual positions of word-end within the line. Until recently I had not looked at MacNeice’s version for several decades, but I think that I must, *si parva licet*, have been following his example, only with far less skill and without the help of E. R. Dodds, MacNeice’s friend and colleague, who co-translated certain passages.

A third basic difficulty facing every translator of Aeschylus is the extreme compression of meaning(s) in the dense Greek of his choral poetry. This compression often requires various kinds of expansion in English, which can violate the distinctive texture of the original, but is truer to it than a domesticating translation, which would opt for a single clear meaning. At the level of diction, I aim to preserve the multiple meanings or associations of particular words and phrases, especially when they contribute to significant patterns of diction or thought in the play and the trilogy.¹⁶ This preservation often involves double or ‘over-’translation. Thus, at the beginning of the *parodos* of *Agamemnon*, I translate 41 μέγας ἀντίδικος as ‘great adversary in justice and law’, in order to convey both the Athenian legal sense of ἀντίδικος and the word’s place in the thematizing of justice throughout the trilogy; for similar reasons at 451 I translate προδίκους Ἀτρείδαις as ‘the sons of Atreus, advocates of justice’. Similarly, every time that δίκην is used as a preposition following its object, I translate it ‘just like’—for example, 3 κυνὸς δίκην ‘just like a dog’—to bring across the semantic resonance of δίκην.¹⁷ In Ag. 151 σπευδομένα θυσίαν ἑτέραν, ἄνομόν τιν’ ἄδαιτον, ‘eager for some other sacrifice, | lawless, unaccustomed, without music, without feasting’, I give three senses of ἀνομον, ‘lawless, unaccustomed, without music’, that I think would have been simultaneously audible both to the Chorus hearing Kalchas’ prophecy and to Aeschylus’ audience listening to the Chorus as they quote Kalchas. Sometimes, especially in the case of an adjective or participle, the challenge is less the lexical meaning of a particular word than how best to bring out its multiple verbal force. For example, in the lines immediately following mention of the ‘sacrifice, | lawless, unaccustomed, without music, without feasting’, the

¹⁵ MacNeice (1936).

¹⁶ Cf. Goldhill (1984) 4 *et passim* on ‘the text’s plurality, its openness to the production of meaning’ and ‘the difficulties of placing defined limits to the text’s meaning’.

¹⁷ Wilson (2006).

Chorus continue to quote Kalchas referring to the sacrifice as *νεικέων τέκτονα σύμφυτον οὐ δεισήγορα*: *μίμνει γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος | οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων μῆνις τεκνόποιος*, ‘an inborn builder of conflicts, without fear of a man; for there remains, rising in response, a terrifying | treacherous house-keeper, a mindful, child-avenger wrath’, 153–5). Here ‘mindful child-avenger wrath’ preserves the double force of *τεκνόποιος*, a word through which Kalchas prophetically hints at both ‘the wrath of the child to be avenged’ (Iphigeneia) and ‘the wrath of the child that shall avenge’ (Orestes, Aigisthos), as well as the ‘great, house-damaging | divinity with heavy wrath’ (*μέγαν οἰκοσυνῆ | δαίμονα καὶ βαρύμηνιν*) of whom the Chorus sing at 1481–2. Sometimes it is necessary to spell out this kind of double meaning at greater length. In *Ag.* 233–4, for example, I translate *πέπλοισι περιπετῆ παντὶ θυμῶι* as ‘wrapped about in her robes as she desperately grasped at his’, in order to convey both the active and passive force of the compound *περιπετῆ*, the image of Iphigeneia being lifted aloft with her robes trailing toward the ground, as she reaches to touch and cling in supplication to those of her father.¹⁸ Here I also try to reproduce something of the striking alliterative force of the Greek plosives (*πέπλοισι περιπετῆ πάντι*) with my admittedly less powerful English liquids (‘wrapped . . . robes’) and dentals (‘down . . . desperately’).

I think it is important to preserve, where possible, the grammatical voice and agency of the original. Think of Lattimore’s radically misleading translation of *Ag.* 218, ‘When the yoke of necessity *was put upon him*’, which actually reverses the sense of *ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀνάγκας ἔδν λέπαδνον*—literally, ‘When *he put on the yoke-strap of necessity*’—and makes Agamemnon seem like a passive victim rather than a willing agent. Sometimes, however, keeping the agency of the original text is difficult. For example, I translate *Agamemnon* 369–73, *οὐκ ἔφα τις | θεοὺς βροτῶν ἀξιούσθαι μέλειν | ὅσοις ἀθίκτων χάρις | πατοῖθ’*, as ‘Someone denied | the gods deign to concern themselves | with those among mortals | who trample the grace of things | not to be touched’. The Greek says, literally, ‘with as many | of mortals by whom the grace of things not to be touched | is trampled’. I have made the passive verb active and the nominative subject, *χάρις*, objective; changed the relative indefinite indicating quantity, *ὅσοις*, into a simple relative; and put *ἀθίκτων* (‘not to be touched’) in the climactic position instead of *πατοῖθ’* (‘is trampled’)—all this because in English the passive seems too weak to be climactic and the expression of quantity too awkward (and with or without these changes, I can’t figure out how to get the clearly significant juxtaposition *θεοὺς βροτῶν* into my English). For a similar reason I change Greek passive to English active at 469–70: ‘for Zeus’ eyes | throw Zeus’ thunderbolts’, instead of *βάλλεται γὰρ ὅσοις | Διόθεν*

¹⁸ Lebeck (1971) 81–3.

κεραυνός (literally, ‘a thunderbolt of Zeus | is thrown by Zeus’ eyes’, where the word order makes ‘of Zeus’ felt with both ‘eyes’ and ‘thunderbolt’.

Word order can be a challenge in translating Greek poetry of any kind into English, owing to the differences between a highly inflected and a relatively uninflected language and to the role of particles in conveying emphasis. In translating Aeschylean choral poetry, the challenge is all the greater, owing to the compression of meaning in lyric metre, in comparison with its fuller expression in the iambic trimeter and trochaic tetrameter catalectic of dialogue. When it is a matter of a cognate accusative, as in 408 ἄτλατα τλάσα, I can bring the effect into English with relatively little difficulty: ‘daring what is not to be dared’. (Or should it be ‘daring the undared’, with reference to such daring being unexampled rather than having to be avoided? Or both?) But when Aeschylus separates a noun and adjective that agree with one another, it usually is difficult not to juxtapose the two in English translation. For example, in 386 προβούλου παῖς ἄφερτος Ἄτας, the line begins and ends with an adjective and noun in the genitive, agreeing with one another and framing a different noun-adjective pair in the nominative. I could do no better than ‘purposive Ruin’s irresistible child’ which loses the adjective A, noun B, adjective B, noun A *chiasmus*, but at least preserves the emphatic double alliteration of π and α in Greek with alliteration of p and r in English). Often it is impossible to keep both the word-order and the agency of the Greek. As a rule translators opt for the word order (see, for example, Fraenkel’s translation), even if this means turning an active into a passive or vice versa, but I privilege agency or word-order according to what seems more important in a given passage.

On the other hand, I find it hard to bring into English the numerous ambiguities of word order, syntax, and sound, which also tend to occur in Aeschylean choral lyric more often and more insistently than in dialogue, because of the greater condensation and concentration of meaning. Such ambiguities often give rise to intense scholarly controversy, where one scholar argues for one meaning, another for another, and each implicitly denies that both meanings can be present at once. A good example is the passage I have already quoted, describing Iphigeneia ‘wrapped about in her robes as she desperately grasped at [Agamemnon’s]’, where Fraenkel and most other scholars take περιπετηῆ in 233 as passive and πέπλοισι as instrumental,¹⁹ but Lloyd-Jones translates περιπετηῆ as active and governing πέπλοισι.²⁰ As I have already said, following the interpretation of Anne Lebeck, I think the best way to deal with the ambiguity is through double or over-translation.²¹

¹⁹ Fraenkel (1962) i. 105; cf. ii. 134.

²⁰ Lloyd-Jones (1970) 29; cf. Lloyd-Jones (1962).

²¹ Lebeck (1971) 81–3.

Similarly, at *Ag.* 105–6, in the second and third lines of the *parodos*, *ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνείει | πειθῶ, μολπᾶν ἀλκάν σύμφυτος αἰὼν*, I translate, ‘for still from the gods the vitality that has grown old with me | breathes down persuasion, the strength of song, as (my) strength’. In other words, I translate *ἀλκάν* twice: both in apposition to *πειθῶ*, the direct object of *καταπνείει*, and in a predicate relation to the same word. I do this because I think that different members of Aeschylus’ audience would have heard one or the other or both of these constructions, and I would not rule out the possibility that some might also have heard *πειθῶ μολπᾶν*, ‘persuasion (consisting) of songs’, as the direct object of *καταπνείει*, and *ἀλκάν* as a predicate accusative. I do not, however, think that this latter possibility is sufficiently probable to include it in my translation; rather, I assume that something in the oral delivery of the words—or in the music and dance—would have served a function similar to that of our comma, articulating the semantic units to make it clear that *μολπᾶν* goes with *ἀλκάν*, not with *πειθῶ*. On the other hand, the kind of syntactical ambiguity where a word seems to go both with a preceding *and* a following word or phrase is common in Aeschylus. For example, at 381–2 *οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἑπαλξίς | πλοῦτου πρὸς κόρον*, I translate, ‘There is no defence in wealth | against wealth’s surfeit’, taking *πλοῦτου* as an adnominal genitive with both *ἑπαλξίς* and *κόρον*, as *Διόθεν* should be taken with both *ὄσσοις* and *κεραυνός* in 469–70 (above).

One problem I have yet to solve in translating Aeschylus is how best to preserve the concentrated force of compound adjectives, which is inevitably diluted by English periphrases and over-translations: for example, ‘a woman’s expectant heart that plans with the will of a man’s’ simply does not do justice to *Ag.* 11 *γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐπίζων κέαρ*. It conveys the double association of—*βουλον* with *βουλεύω* and *βούλομαι* (‘plan’ and ‘will’), but it does not register the powerful juxtaposition in the Greek of two words with significantly contrasting meanings (especially in this play) that do not agree grammatically, *γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον* . . . , literally ‘a women’s man-willing/man-planning . . .’ (cf. 370 *θεοὺς βροτῶν*). Lattimore translates ‘a lady’s | male strength of heart in its high confidence ordains’, which catches the juxtaposition but misses the willing and planning; Collard has ‘of a woman whose heart in its hope plans like a man’. It might be more effective in this instance to use a compound adjective or adjectives in English, for example, ‘a woman’s man-willing, man-planning, hopeful heart’, which juxtaposes ‘woman’s’ and ‘man-’ and conveys not only the sense that Klutaimestra’s heart functions like a man’s, but the possibility in the Greek that the planning, willing, and hope are aimed at a man. The compound adjective(s) in English would be nicely foreignizing, but in many, perhaps most, cases I can’t make one work. For instance, to translate *Ag.* 12–13, *εἶδ’ ἂν δὲ νυκτίπλαγκτον ἔνδροσόν τ’ ἔχω | εὐνήν*, as

‘Whenever I keep my night-wandering bed drenched | with dew’, would not convey what I think is the meaning of *νυκτίπλαγκτον*, ‘which at night I move from place to place’; therefore I use a far weaker relative clause: ‘Whenever I keep my bed drenched with dew that at night | I move from place to place’. Sometimes a relative clause in English for a compound adjective in Greek will work, for example, ‘those who kill many’ for *τῶν πολυκτόνων* in 461; all too often, however, a relative phrase or clause glosses rather than translates the adjective and seems false to Aeschylus distinctive style. Sometimes I translate compound adjectives a bit freely in order to keep them as adjectives, and I rationalize the freedom by an appeal to other stylistic criteria. In 458, for example, I tell myself that ‘it pays the debt of a democratic curse’ is all right for *δημοκράντου δ’ ἀρᾶς τίνει χρέος*, because the alliteration is effective, and there really isn’t that much difference in meaning between ‘democratic’ and ‘democratic’. All told, my inability to translate Aeschylus’ compound adjectives consistently by compound adjectives in English seems to me the single greatest flaw in my effort at a foreignizing translation.

In order to provide students with an accurate basis for interpretation, I try always to translate the same Greek word or word-root by the same English word. For example, I use ‘grace’ for *χάρις* and *χάριω* in 371, 416, and 421, and ‘futile’ and ‘futilely’ for *μάταιον*, *ματαίαν*, and *μάταν* in 387, 421, and 422 (even though, in the case of *χάρις*, a note will be needed at 421 to clarify the word’s semantic range). I want students to be able to make their own connection between e.g. Ag. 381–4,

For there is no defence
in wealth against wealth’s surfeit for one who
has kicked the great altar
of Justice into invisibility,

and 464–6,

the dark Furies, reversing fortune,
in time rub out the life of a man fortunate without justice,
dim his light; *there is no defence* when he ends among the unseen.

Similarly, I want students to see for themselves Agamemnon’s movement from the man ‘*breathing with the winds of fortune that struck against him*’ (187 *ἐμπαίοις τύχαισι συμπνέων*) to the man who, ‘when he put on the yoke-strap of necessity, | *breathing an impious wind of thought that had veered about*, | impure, unholy—from then | he changed his mind to think the all-daring’ (218–21 *ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀνάγκας ἔδω λέπαδνον | φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῆ τροπαίαν | ἀναγνον ἀνίερων, τόθεν | τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω*).

Interpretation builds on these kinds of echoes and resonances of diction and imagery. Therefore it is important to translate as closely and consistently

as possible, even when the sequence of thought in English seems strange or unlikely, as in the wonderful sequence of metaphors in 389–98, where the Chorus moves from ‘conspicuous damage’ in the abstract to ‘base bronze’ to a man who ‘by rubbing and beatings becomes | a fixed, indelible black | when justly judged’ to ‘a child chas[ing] a winged bird’ and ‘imposing on his city an irresistible affliction’. I have not, however, figured out how to convey effectively the etymological echo in *πρόστριμμα* (395), the ‘affliction’ imposed on the city, of *τρίβωι* (391), the ‘rubbing’ of the man ‘in the manner of base bronze’, so that association remains unclear in the translation and may require a note.

I would like to mention an error in my translation, which for the purposes of this chapter I have retained, because it seems instructive. In 398 I, and apparently I alone among recent editors and translators, would like to accept Blomfeld’s *φῶτα Δίκα* in place of *φῶτ’ ἄδικον*, the reading of the MSS, even though with the latter reading one can easily understand *τις*, from *οὔτις θεῶν* in 397, as subject of 398 *καθαίρει*, and even though my usual practice, as I have said, is to translate the MSS when they make sense. I think that an explicit mention of Justice near the end of the antistrophe as the subject of an active verb, punishing ‘the man who turns to these things’, neatly and aptly picks up the mention of Justice near the end of the strophe as the figure whose ‘great altar’ the surfeited man has ‘kicked . . . into invisibility’.²² Unfortunately I tried to have my cake and eat it too, when I wrote, ‘Justice takes down the unjust man | who turns to these things’, because I translated *both φῶτ’ ἄδικον and φῶτα Δίκα*. I think that I really liked the sound of ‘Justice takes down the unjust man’, and, *nimum amator ingenii mei*, I went with what I liked, even though the same basic point can be made by a more accurate translation of Blomfeld’s text, ‘Justice takes down the man who turns to these things’ (*τὸν δ’ ἐπίστροφον τῶν | φῶτα Δίκα καθαίρει*). This is the kind of mistake that can happen all too easily in translating Aeschylean choral poetry, when one gets caught up, as I did, in the difficulty of the Greek, the lure of a clever emendation, and the sound of one’s own words. I definitely will have to correct my translation, and in the end I probably will decide to follow the MSS.

Finally, I would like to mention briefly four ways in which I try to convey in English the texture of Aeschylean choral poetry. First, like MacNeice, I do my best to reproduce enjambments and word-end at unusual positions in the line (e.g. 375 *ὑπὲρ τὸ βέλτιστον*, ‘beyond what is best’; 393 *δικαιωθεῖς*, ‘when justly judged’). Second, I always use the English ‘two’ or ‘twofold’ or ‘double’ where the Greek has a dual form, though perhaps this is not as important in

²² Perhaps this is an instance of what Michael Jameson once referred to as a choosing a textual reading according to ‘the exigencies of making a translation’, though my exigencies may be no more than a fondness for my own interpretation (Jameson [1959] 276).

Aeschylus as in Sophocles, where the dual almost always has a special dramatic force. Third, in the light of recent work by Nancy Felson and others on *deixis* in archaic Greek lyric, I make it a point to be accurate with demonstratives and to indicate clearly shifts of directionality and viewpoint, and changes in focalization (Felson 2004). Fourth, in dealing with exclamatory emotional cries and shouts, as in 410–11 *ἰὼ, ἰὼ δῶμα δῶμα καὶ πρόμοι, | ἰὼ λέχος καὶ στίβοι φιλόνορες*, I find that words like ‘O’, ‘ah’, or ‘alas’ are simply too weak and unemotional. Anne Carson’s strategy in her translations of Sophocles’ *Electra* and four plays of Euripides is to leave these sound-words in the original Greek.²³ This might work in performance (as it did in Andrei Serban’s Euripides trilogy), but it seems graphically intrusive and potentially distracting and annoying in a version intended for students and other ‘Greekless’ readers. Therefore I have decided to follow Eamon Grennan and Rachel Kitzinger’s practice, in their recent translation of *Oedipus at Colonus* (Grennan and Kitzinger 2004), and insert a kind of spoken stage direction either into a speaker’s words or between the lines, which each reader can mentally translate into an effective expression of emotion. Thus at 408–11, *πολλὰ δ’ ἔστυνον | τόδ’ ἐννέποντες δόμων προφήται· | ἰὼ, ἰὼ δῶμα δῶμα καὶ πρόμοι, | ἰὼ λέχος . . .*, I translate: ‘With many a groan | the prophets of the house spoke (with cries of pain): | ‘The house, the house and leaders, | the bed . . .’.

CONCLUSION: TRANSLATION AND PEDAGOGY

I’ve aimed in this description of my practice as a translator to show in detail how I try to produce a translation of Aeschylean choral poetry that will be pedagogically effective. For me, this means a translation that is as close to the Greek as I can make it while still being readable, a translation on the basis of which students can learn to think critically about the play in its historical and cultural contexts, in more or less the same way in which I think critically about it on the basis of the Greek text. I want students and other readers to feel confident that the interpretations they generate, however they may differ from my own, are valid and worthwhile precisely because they are based on a translation that is accurate and attuned to the distinctive features of Aeschylean style and thought.

At the same time, I think it is important not to make my version too readable and comprehensible, so that those who work with it cannot easily assimilate it to the norms of their own language and culture. Instead, I want to

²³ Carson (2001); (2006).

challenge my students and other readers with at least some of the notorious difficulty of Aeschylean choral poetry, so they will keep in mind that they are reading a work composed in another language, time, and place and that they must respect and respond to its distinctive language and conventions of style and thought, its historical and cultural difference, if they are to achieve close familiarity and genuine understanding. With this in mind, I aim for a foreignizing rather than a domesticating translation. If I were a better poet, the translation would be even more foreignizing, for example, through the greater use of compound adjectives in English wherever Aeschylus has them in the Greek. As it is, I hope that by preserving or at least suggesting the specific features of Aeschylean language and style that I discuss in this chapter, my translation will be a text for students to read and interpret with pleasure and understanding.

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Working with Translators

J. M. Coetzee

Books of mine have been translated from the English in which they are written into some twenty-five other languages, the majority of them European. Of the twenty-five I can read two or three moderately well. Of many of the rest I know not a word; I have to trust my translators to render fairly what I have written. Whether that trust is well placed I find out only rarely, when a bilingual reader who has compared translation with original happens to report back to me. Some such reports come as a jolt. In Russia, I discover, *The Master of Petersburg* has been renamed *Autumn in Petersburg*; in the Italian version of *Dusklands*, a man opens a wooden crate with the help of a bird (what I wrote was that he used a crow, that is, a crowbar). Most reports, however, are reassuring. Even in the money-driven world of modern publishing, shoddy translations seem to be rare. In the translation of literary works in particular, the urge to give of one's best even when it may not be noticed still seems to reign.

If one were asked to epitomize the profession of authorship, 'noble' would not be the first word that came to mind. But 'noble' would not be an inappropriate epithet for the translator whose guiding star is Fides and who can hope for neither fame nor fortune.

As author I am gratified when a translator contacts me for advice. Among those who regularly confer with me are my French, German, Swedish, Dutch, Serbian, and Korean translators. On the other hand, there are some who have never been in touch, among them my Turkish and Japanese translators. Given the differences in linguistic structure and cultural background between Turkish and English, and between Japanese and English, I would have thought that these two would find my texts quite as troublesome as their European confrères do. But no, I would seem to be mistaken. Or perhaps it is out of politeness that they do not contact me; perhaps they have other English-language informants to fall back on.

Are my books easy or hard to translate? Sentence by sentence, my prose is generally lucid, in the sense that within the sentence syntactic constructions

are unambiguous and logical relations between components as clear as I can make them. Where ambiguity occurs, there is usually a reason for it. On the other hand, I sometimes use words with the full freight of their history behind them, and historical freight is not easily carried across from one language to another. As for social freight, my English is rarely embedded in any particular sociolinguistic landscape, which relieves the translator of one potentially vexatious burden. On the other hand, I do tend to be allusive, and not always to signal the presence of allusion.

Dialogue comes with its own set of problems, particularly when it is very informal and incorporates regional usages, contemporary catch-phrases and allusions, or slang. My dialogue is rarely of this kind. For the most part its character remains formal, even if its rhythms are somewhat more abrupt than the rhythms of narrative prose. So hitting the right register is not difficult for the translator.

If my dialogue is on occasion aberrant, this tends to be where it comes from the mouths of children or of characters to whom English is not a first language. In general, it is best for such speech to be translated not word for word but by speech typical of children in the language translated into (hereafter called the 'target language'), or by the speech of a foreigner making typical foreign slips.

Taking all these factors into consideration, on a scale of difficulty running from a low of one to a high of ten I would say that the prose of my fiction would rate a score of about seven: it is not prose one can translate while listening to the radio, and now and again one has to rack one's brains a bit, but the challenges it proposes are rarely insuperable.

My novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* presents an unusual problem for the translator. It is set in an unspecified space at an unspecified time in history. It would be hard to maintain that this milieu is Western, yet despite allusions to 'barbarians', to an imperial palace, and to such items as lacquered armour, it is as hard to fit the action snugly into the Far East. The language of the novel is more or less bare of allusion to the past of the English language and indeed to the history of Western thought. Furthermore, within it there are passages of what may be conceived of as translation from a hypothetical 'barbarian' language into the language of the narrator and thence into English (such passages are marked by a simplified syntax and lexicon). As for dialogue, this can be conceived of as translated by an invisible hand from an unspecified foreign tongue into English.

The principal character in the novel, and its narrator, is called simply 'the Magistrate' and is addressed as 'Magistrate'. His principal duty is to officiate over the system of justice along this part of the frontier, but in the absence of a

bureaucracy he seems also to oversee the day-to-day operation of the neglected frontier town where he has lived for years.

Since there is no term in English for someone who is in effect judge and mayor and town clerk, since a *Magistrate* in this book would not be a *Magistrate* in any other book, does it matter what title the translator gives this man in the target language? Perhaps not; but there are good approximations and bad approximations. If *Magistrate* is the authorial approximation in English, what would be a good approximation in German, for instance?

The question was raised in correspondence by my German translator—specifically, by my second German translator, since two different translations of *Waiting for the Barbarians* have appeared in German. In modern German, *der Magistrat* denotes the magistracy, not a single individual. The standard translation of English ‘magistrate’ is *Friedensrichter*. But *Friedensrichter* translates back into English as ‘Justice of the Peace’, which—in America at least—is the title of a quite lowly office. Hence the translator’s decision to resurrect *der Magistrat* in its old sense, a sense still alive in Switzerland, where *Magistrat* is a title as well as an office.

Phrasings planted in *Waiting for the Barbarians* for their generic Far Eastern associations naturally aroused the interest of my Chinese translator. In the following passage the Magistrate speaks:

I . . . am no less infected with [the vision of Empire] than the faithful Colonel Joll as he tracks the enemies of Empire through the boundless desert, sword unsheathed to cut down barbarian after barbarian until at last he finds and slays the one whose destiny it should be (or if not he then his son or unborn grandson) to climb the bronze gateway to the Summer Palace and topple the globe surmounted by the tiger rampant that symbolized eternal domination.

‘It would be highly appreciated’, wrote my translator in an e-mail, ‘if you could help clarify what Summer Palace and globe surmounted by the tiger rampant . . . refer to. I wonder if [they] refer to the Old Summer Palace in Beijing that was destroyed by British and French allied force in 1848.’

The question may seem simple, but it holds surprising depths. It may mean: Are the words ‘Summer Palace . . .’ *intended* to refer to the historical Summer Palace? It may also mean: *Do* the words refer to the historical Summer Palace?

I, as author, am the sole person able to answer the first question, and my answer must be that as far as my recollection goes I did not (consciously) intend to refer to the palace in Beijing; I certainly did not intend to evoke the historical sack of that palace, with its attendant national humiliations. At the same time, however, I did intend that enough of an association with imperial China should be evoked to balance and complicate, for instance, the

association with imperial Russia evoked elsewhere in the book by the phrase ‘Third Bureau’, the arm of the security forces for which Colonel Joll works.

As for whether the words in question *do* refer to the palace in Beijing, I as author am powerless to say. The words are written; I cannot control the associations they awaken. But my translator is not so powerless: a nudge here, a nuance there, and the reader may be either directed towards or headed off from the Beijing of 1848.

The necessary imperfection of translation—brought about in the first place by the incapacity of any given target language to supply for each single word in the source language a corresponding single word that would cover, precisely and without overlap, the denotation of the original and its major connotations to boot—is so widely accepted that the translator becomes accustomed to aiming for the best possible translation rather than a hypothetical perfect one.

But there are occasions where less than perfect translation of a key word can have serious consequences. My novel *Foe*, if it is about any single subject, is about authorship: about what it means to be an author not only in the professional sense (the profession of author was just beginning to have a concrete meaning in Daniel Defoe’s day) but also in a sense that verges if not on the divine then at least on the demiurgic: sole author, sole creator.

Here is an exchange between my Serbian translator and myself, from the time when she was working on *Foe*.

A.B.: *Autor*, alas, is not a profession in Serbian. In some places I simply have to say *writer* (denotes strictly a literatus) . . . [She goes on to caution against too many Latin-sounding words in a Serbian text.]

J.M.C.: The notion that one can be an author as one can be a baker is fairly fundamental to my conception of *Foe*. ‘Writer’ would suffice only if the distinction between *writer* and *scribe/scrivener* were quite marked.

A.B.: You write: ‘The notion that one can be an author as one can be a baker is fairly fundamental to my conception of *Foe*.’ That is precisely the reason it worries me. The baker bakes, the author authors, yet our verb [in Serbian] is *makes/creates*. The English senses are better covered by *tvorac* (maker/creator/founder) [than by *autor*]. Defoe is properly the *tvorac* of *Robinson Crusoe* . . .

You also write: ‘“Writer” would suffice only if the distinction between *writer* and *scribe/scrivener* were quite marked.’ It is, but the word lacks the symbolical quality of the English *author*. I think I will try to use the maker/creator word, toning it down with *writer* only when absolutely necessary.

J.M.C.: That sounds the best solution. *Makir* (maker) is the word routinely used for *poet* in Scottish poetry of the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries.

A.B.: Good to know about *makir*—such a resonant word.

Two further exchanges with A.B. The first illustrates the sometimes inconvenient demands that the grammar of the target language can make, in this case a demand for the insertion of a verbal element that is not present in the source text. The passage in question is from the lecture ‘His Man and He’ (2003): ‘A visitation by illness may be figured as a visitation by the devil, or by a dog figuring the devil, and vice versa, the visitation figured as an illness.’

A.B.: In the third visitation (figured as illness) I have to say by whom/what? . . . ‘Visitation’ [in Serbian] requires a distinct verbal phrase for each and every agent, God, Devil, illness, etc. (A devilish sentence, though, I hate to spoil it.)

J.M.C.: Might there not be a way of avoiding the question by recasting the sentence?

A.B.: I recast the sentence many times. No neat solution.

J.M.C.: Have you tried paraphrasing the troublesome passage without the use of the passive, and then translating the paraphrase?

A.B.: I ended up with a less than perfect sentence, too long, no rhythm. But whoever does the figuring is no longer accountable.

In the final exchange I quote, an unexpected difficulty is created by transliteration into the Cyrillic alphabet. Elizabeth Costello, the central figure in the book by the same title, looks forward to seeing her writings on the library shelves among such great Cs as Chaucer, Coleridge, and Conrad. Then with dismay she realizes that her nearest neighbour is likely to be Marie Corelli.

The first headache for the translator is of course that in Serbian ‘Chaucer’, unlike ‘Coleridge’, ‘Corelli’, and ‘Costello’, is not spelled with an initial K.

A.B.: Should I drop Chaucer, or replace him with, say, Keats? . . . Corelli is a K, but the allusion would be lost on Serbian readers. May I insert an adjective like ‘sentimental’ or ‘very minor’?

J.M.C.: Drop Chaucer. Then I suggest you consult a Serbian-language encyclopedia and pick out a minor English-language writer near to Kostelo.

A.B.: Minor writers: only the popular ones get into foreign encyclopedias. Agatha Christie, James Fenimore Cooper, A. J. Cronin?

J.M.C.: Agatha Christie, I think.

Here are two communications from my French translator at the time when she was working on *Youth*. The first illustrates a situation familiar to translators, where a phrase that the writer, in his innocence, regards as perfectly clear is revealed by the test of translation to be ambiguous.

C. DU P.: You write: ‘London is full of beautiful girls. They come from all over the world: as au pairs, as language students, simply as tourists.’ I tend to understand that these girls are in London to learn English, rather than doing tertiary studies in languages. I would say: *des filles venues des quatre coins du monde pour apprendre l’anglais* (rather than *étudiantes en langues*).

The second communication illustrates the reverse: a word that has complex connotations in the source language, connotations that cannot dependably be evoked in the target. The text runs: ‘In a perfect world he would sleep only with perfect women, women of perfect femininity yet with a certain darkness at their core that will respond to his own darker self.’

J.M.C.: *Dark* here is the *dark* of *dark secrets*, *dark history*, etc. I don’t have enough of a feel for the connotations of *sombre* in French, but English *somber* has connotations of sad or saddening that we don’t want.

C. DU P.: This not an easy one. The connotations of *dark secrets* would be rendered by the French *noir*... as in *magie noire*, *messe noire*, *roman noir*... I am not sure *noir* will work in this passage.

J.M.C.: *Dark*, as used here, is a very Lawrenceian word. Is there a standard D. H. Lawrence translation in France? If so, you should use the word that routinely translates ‘dark’ there. The first book to check would be *The Plumed Serpent*, where it occurs all over the place.

C. DU P.: In the entries [on Lawrence] in *Le Dictionnaire des œuvres*, on *Le serpent à plumes*, there is a quote referring to Cipriano Viedma: *Il possédait un pouvoir magnétique que son éducation n’avait pas entamé. Cette éducation s’étendait comme un léger voile sur le lac sombre de son âme rude*. In the commentary, phrases like *sa nature intime* (for Kate) keep cropping up (for *core*?)—*monde primitif* also occurs. We could think of *secret*, of *ténébreux*: *Ma jeunesse ne fut qu’un ténébreux orage*—Baudelaire; *Le labyrinthe des consciences les plus ténébreuses*—Balzac—both anachronic, I know.

We had to settle for *sombre* and abandon the allusiveness of the original: *Femmes... qui auraient au fond d’elles-mêmes quelque chose de sombre qui répondait à ce qu’il y a en lui de sombre*.

The heroine of *Age of Iron* is a classics professor dying of cancer. The novel follows the movement of her thoughts, and this creates certain problems for the Korean translator. When Professor Curren’s mind wanders to the West’s classical past, should he treat these moments as allusions and footnote them? Since such allusions are often glancing and casual, how can he be sure he has picked them all up? Is a passing reference to a photograph of Sophie Schliemann worth a long footnote on Troy, Homer’s *Iliad*, and the excavation of what he thought was Agamemnon’s tomb by Heinrich Schliemann? The phrase *amor matris* crosses the professor’s mind. For the benefit of a reader without Latin, the famous ambiguity of the phrase can be explained in a quick footnote; but how does one evoke the atmosphere of rote learning in classrooms going back six centuries in the West?

In English, the etymological connection between nursing of the health-care type and sustenance (*nourishment*) is present though somewhat hidden by the

drift of sound-change. The connection is clearer in French *nourrice*. How, without becoming pedantic, does one explain to the Korean reader why it is the French rather than the English word that flits through the consciousness of the heroine?

In *Boyhood*, the young hero is obsessed with cricket. The ball-throwing machine that he constructs to give himself batting practice in the back yard is easy enough to picture as long as one has an idea of the relation of batsman to bowler in cricket. For the Korean (or indeed the Serbian or French) reader, is cricket worth a long elucidatory note, or should the machine be left unexplained as a cultural puzzle?

The English word ‘portly’ is in transition from an older sense of ‘stately’, where *port* is the same element as in ‘deportment’, to a newer sense of ‘stout’. This instability has certain consequences: a person one calls ‘portly’ is a figure of fun in a way that a person one calls ‘fat’ is not—he or she bears his or her weight with a gravity that is comical.

How does one translate ‘portly Paul Kruger’ (in *Youth*) into Dutch? Dutch offers *statig* for the older sense, *dik* for the newer. There is no word that carries both senses. *Dik* (English thick, solid, plump, stout) and *gezet* (settled, solid, stout) are not complimentary but lack the euphemistic shading.

In *Elizabeth Costello*, Elizabeth’s sister gives a speech at a graduation ceremony. Her speech ends as follows: ‘*studia humanitatis*...are truly on their deathbed. [Their death] has been brought about by the monster enthroned by those very studies as first and animating principle of the universe: the monster of reason, mechanical reason. But that is another story for another day.’ The text continues: ‘That is the end of it, the end of Blanche’s oration . . .’ In Dutch, unfortunately, the standard word for ‘reason’ is *rede*. *Rede* is also the standard word for ‘oration’ or ‘speech’. This double function makes etymological sense—it parallels the development of Latin *ratio* from an arithmetic account, a reckoning, to accounting or computation in the abstract, to scheme or system, to systematic thought—but to use the word twice here would sow confusion. The best solution my Dutch translator and I could come to was to resurrect the Latin word: *het monster van de ratio, de mechanische rede*.

The English word *highway* is rich in connotation. Via *highwayman* it carries eighteenth-century associations with risk and danger: compared with a mere ‘road’, a ‘highway’ is positively glamorous (this is, of course, not true in the United States, where the word ‘highway’ is in everyday use). In my story ‘A House in Spain’, the house in question lies in a Catalan village off the ‘highway’. But in the new Europe supervised from Brussels, my Dutch translator informs me, there is a strict and exhaustive hierarchy of road types, with associated maximum speeds. This hierarchy does not include cognates of

'highway'. For my Dutch translator, the critical question was whether the village is located near an *autosnelweg* (express motorway), a *snelweg* (expressway), or a lowly *provinciale weg* (provincial road). If we take the author's intentions into reckoning and try to match referent with referent, the likeliest answer would be the last; but if we had no author to interrogate, how would we know?

There are two quite different considerations at work here. One has to do with real-life road types and their congruence or lack of congruence with the author's intentions. The other has to do with the range of historical, social, and literary associations called forth by the idea of a village not far from the highway, and the range called forth by the idea of a *dorpje* not far from the *provinciale weg*.

No matter how competent a translator might be in both languages, and how finely attuned to nuance, there are texts for which he or she will simply feel no sympathy. In an ideal world, the best course for the translator would be to decline to work on such texts; but in the real world such rectitude may not always be practicable.

Waiting for the Barbarians was first translated into German in 1984. By common consent this translation was not a success, and the book has since been retranslated. Why was the first translation a failure? The translator could read my English perfectly competently, word by word and sentence by sentence, and turn it into adequate German prose. Yet as I read the text she produced I felt more and more disquieted: the world that her pages evoked was, in subtle and not so subtle respects, not the world I had imagined; the narrator whose voice I was hearing was not the narrator I had conceived.

In part this was a matter of word choice: given a choice between two valid options, the translator seemed more often than not to choose the one I would *not* have chosen. But in the main it was a matter of rhythm—rhythm of speech but also rhythm of thought. The sensibility behind the German text, a sensibility embodied in particular in the speech of the narrator, felt alien to me.

Here are a few sentences from near the beginning of the book, followed by the translation in question. The Magistrate is alone among the ruins in the desert that he has for years been desultorily excavating.

One evening I lingered among the ruins after the children had run home to their suppers, into the violet of dusk and the first stars, the hour when, according to lore, ghosts awaken. I put my ear to the ground as the children had instructed me, to hear what they hear: thumps and groans under the earth, the deep irregular beating of drums. Against my cheek I felt the patter of sand driving from nowhere to nowhere across the wastes. The last light faded, the ramparts grew dim against the sky and dissolved into the darkness. For an hour I waited, wrapped in my cloak, with my back

against the corner-post of a house in which people must once have talked and eaten and played music. I sat watching the moon rise, opening my senses to the night, waiting for a sign . . .

Eines Abends streifte ich, nachdem die Kinder zum Essen nach Hause gegangen waren, zwischen den Ruinen herum, im Violett der Abenddämmerung, wenn die erste Sterne aufleuchten, zu jener Stunde, wo der Überlieferung gemäß die Geister erwachen. Ich legte ein Ohr an den Boden, wie die Kinder es mir geraten hatten, weil ich hören wollte, was sie hören: dumpfe Schläge und Stöhnen unter der Erde, tiefe, unregelmässige Trommelschläge. Ich spürte an meiner Wange den knirschenden Sand, der von irgendwoher irgendwohin durchs öde Land treibt. Das letzte Licht erlosch, die Wälle verschwammen am Himmel und lösten sich in der Dunkelheit auf. In meinen Umhang gehüllt, wartete ich ein Stunde lang, an den Eckpfosten eines Hauses gelehnt, in welchem wohl einmal Menschen gesprochen, gegessen und Musik gemacht haben. Ich saß da und sah zu, wie der Mond aufging; meine Sinne öffneten sich der Nacht, und ich wartete auf ein Zeichen . . .

Consider first the question of lingering. To linger after the children have run home, as the original English has it, is to *not* do something, namely not return home. The children, by contrast, *do* something, namely return home. The Magistrate is thus left behind, not involuntarily, granted, but not by a decisive act of the will either. His ambivalent position emerges from the connotations of the verb *linger*, whose denotative meaning is to stretch out, to make longer. Its closest German equivalent is *verweilen*, whose root—*weil* is cognate with English *while*, as in *while away the time*.

Turn now to the German. After the children have run home, writes the translator (hereafter called Translator I), the Magistrate roams around (*streifte herum*) among the ruins. There is a hint of purposiveness here: he waits for the children to be gone before he does his roaming; perhaps even, he waits for the children to be gone in order to do his roaming. And when they are gone he does not simply stay behind: he actively ambulates. Even the reordering of the verbal elements of the original furthers the decisive thrust of German sentence: One evening I roamed, after the children for their meal had gone home, around among the ruins.

The version by Translator II starts: *Eines Abends blieb ich in den Ruinen zurück, nachdem die Kinder zum Abendbrot heimgelaufen waren . . .*

Heimgelaufen is much neater than *nach Hause gegangen waren*; *Abendbrot* may even improve on the original English *supper*, so homely is it. *Zurückbleiben* is not quite the same as *linger*, but at least it is equally inactive; and the rhythm of the sentence is appropriately unpurposive.

In the original, the Magistrate lingers into the hour when, ‘according to lore’, ghosts awaken. *Lore* is cognate with English *learn* and German *lehren*.

The word is no longer part of everyday English usage, and this, combined with the fact that it usually occurs in the context of romantic or magical stories about the past, gives the word a folkish feel, quite unlike the more elevated *tradition*, though both words denote that which passes or is passed on, *überliefert*, from generation to generation. German does not have the double inheritance, Germanic and Romance, of English, so ready-made low/high pairs such as *lore/tradition* are not available, but it nevertheless has perfectly adequate lexical resources to reflect high/low oppositions. Translator I renders *lore* by *die Überlieferung*, Translator II by *der Volksglaube*, popular belief, which better reflects the humble status of the families of the settlement.

‘Into the violet of dusk and the first stars, the hour when . . . ghosts awaken’. There is obviously some elision here: if one were required to restore all elided elements, one would have to write something like: ‘into the violet of dusk and of the first stars, that is, into the hour when ghosts awaken’. But the elisions have a function. By creating ambiguities, they reflect or mime what I would call a sliding in the narrating sensibility that reinforces the will-less *lingered*.

Should the elided elements be restored in translation? Here we touch on a question of a general nature in the practice of translation. If the original text is in some respect—for instance, in respect of clarity—imperfect, should the translator aspire to remedy that imperfection and thus, in a sense, produce a translation that is better than the original? Simultaneous interpreters routinely ‘clarify’ the original in this way. Thus, for instance, it would require superhuman ingenuity for an interpreter at the United Nations to reproduce impromptu every one of the obfuscations and prevarications with which diplomats routinely sow their utterances. But where literature is concerned, should the translator aim to improve the original or to reproduce it, faults and all, even in cases where reproducing the faults may be more difficult than fixing up the original?

Ich streifte herum, writes Translator I, *im Violett der Abenddämmerung, wenn die erste Sterne aufleuchten, zu jener Stunde, wo der Überlieferung gemäß die Geister erwachen*. I roamed around into the violet of dusk, when the first stars begin to glow, until (or towards) the hour when, according to tradition, the spirits/ghosts awake.

Ich blieb zurück, writes Translator II, *durch die violette Dämmerung unter den ersten Sternen—nach dem Volksglauben die Stunde, in der Geister erwachen*. I stayed behind through the violet dusk under the first stars—according to popular belief the hour when spirits/ghosts awake.

Both translations are clearer—that is to say, more unambiguous—than the original, and therefore neither is exactly faithful to it. The same could be said for the French translation: *Je me suis attardé . . . à l’heure violette du crépuscule*

et des premières étoiles—l'heure, disent les légendes, où les fantômes s'éveillent. The Dutch translation is able to follow the English more closely, elisions and all: *Op een avond draalde ik nog wat . . . in het violet van de schemering en de eerste sterren, het uur waarop, volgens de overleveringen, de geesten ontwaken.* (Here *de overleveringen*, traditional beliefs, is more formal than the alternative *het volksgeloof*, popular belief.)

A second passage from *Waiting for the Barbarians* illustrates some of the difficulties created for the English-to-German translator by the present participle form of the verb, which in German is narrower in its range of use than in English.

If I lived in the magistrate's villa on the quietest street in town, holding sittings in the court on Mondays and Thursdays, going hunting every morning, occupying the evenings in the classics, closing my ears to the activities of this upstart policeman [Colonel Joll], if I resolved to ride out the bad times, keeping my own counsel, I might cease to feel like a man who . . .

Here is the first translator's version:

Wenn ich in der Richtervilla in der ruhigsten Straße der Stadt wohnen würde, wenn ich montags und donnerstags im Gericht Sitzungen anberaumen, jeden Morgen auf die Jagd gehen, meine Abende mit der Lektüre klassischer Schriftsteller ausfüllen, meine Ohren verschließen würde vor dem Treiben dieses arroganten Polizeihengstes, wenn ich den Entschluß fassen würde, diese schlechten Zeiten heil zu überstehen und den Mund zu halten, würde dieses Gefühl vielleicht nachlassen, ich sei ein Mensch, der . . .

There are several reasons to be dissatisfied with this translation. Occupying one's evenings with *der Lektüre klassischer Schriftsteller* is not the same as occupying them with the classics; or rather, the man who would occupy his evenings with *der Lektüre klassischer Schriftsteller* is not the same man as the man who occupies his evenings with the classics: the former sounds like a pedant who does not look to the classic texts for solace, and certainly does not seek in the classical authors friends and companions. The man who in German dismisses Colonel Joll as *ein arrogante Polizeihengste*, an arrogant jackass policeman, is ruled by a different set of prejudices from the man who in English dismisses him as an 'upstart policeman' (in the latter case, or so it seems to me, it is hard to tell whether 'upstart' or 'policeman' is meant to be more insulting to this specialist in state security).

In the second translator's version, the two phrases in question are rendered—exactly—as an *sich mit den Klassikern beschäftigen* and *diese Emporkömmling von Polizisten*.

A more general and perhaps more interesting question to arise from this passage is how a German translator should deal with a long sequence of English-*ing* forms, such as we get here. The English seems to me to contain a quite subtle ambiguity. One abbreviated paraphrase might read: 'If I were to live in the villa, if I were to hold sittings, if I were to go hunting, if I were to occupy myself in the classics, if I were to close my ears, then I might cease to feel like a man who . . .' An alternative paraphrase might read: 'If I were to live in the villa, all the time I lived there holding sittings, going hunting, etc., then I might cease to feel like a man who . . .' The former implies a set of decisions—whether to live in the villa, whether to hold sittings, whether to go hunting, etc.—which, if taken, will (it is hoped) bring about a certain result. The latter paraphrase implies a slip into an enclosed, iterative time-world, an escape from the difficult and unpleasant historical time in which Colonel Joll operates.

The first translator's version sets out a number of conditions, embodied in conditional forms of the verb (*wohnen würde, anberaumen [würde], . . .*), which have a hypothetical consequence: *würde dieses Gefühl vielleicht nachlassen, ich sei ein Mensch, der . . .* The second version sets out the same conditions, embodied in this case in hypothetical (subjunctive) forms of the verb (*in der Magistratsvilla wohnte, Gerichtsverhandlungen leitete, . . .*), leading to a comparable hypothetical consequence: *würde ich mich vielleicht nicht mehr wie ein Mann fühlen, der . . .* In neither case is the implication hinted at in my second paraphrase taken up. In fact, I cannot see a way in which it can be taken up in German without considerable expansion of the passage.

French finds it easier to follow the syntax of the original: *Si j'occupais la villa du magistrat . . . en menant une vie jalonnée par . . . la chasse tous les matins, les soirées consacrées à la lecture des classiques, en fermant mes oreilles . . . si je me résolvais à attendre . . . je cesserais peut-être de me sentir comme un homme pris . . .*

Being entirely ignorant of Korean, I have no idea of what translators from English into Korean do about such rarefied phenomena as the atemporal tendency of the present participle. My own Korean translator needs much more down-to-earth advice. He wants to check on the meaning of specialized English words such as 'thanatophany' and 'off-spin', of unfamiliar English idioms such as 'hug the shadows', of unrecognizable foreign phrases such as *dies irae* and *stoksielalleen*; he wants puzzling references to 'Esther Williams', 'the Isles of the Blest', and 'the charge of the Light Brigade' to be explained.

My Icelandic translator copes perfectly well with European languages but needs help with South African terms such as *muti, snoek, Kaffraria*. My Hebrew translator asks why the word 'many' is misspelled 'menny' in *Disgrace*

(answer: because Thomas Hardy, to whom the passage refers, chose to misspell it).

One of the ways in which a translator can grow in competence is by expanding his or her lexicon. At a more general level, a translator also grows in confidence by confirming that he or she can identify semantic nuances in the source and find ways of representing these, even at times when the target language may prove resistant. Which leads to my final question: Is there a high road (a highway) to excellence in translation, and might that high road be provided by a theory of translation? Would mastery of the theory of translation make one a better translator?

There is a legitimate branch of aesthetics called the theory of literature. But I doubt very much that there is or can be such a thing as a theory of translation—not one, at any rate, from which practitioners of translation will have much to learn. Translation seems to me a craft in a way that cabinetmaking is a craft. There is no substantial theory of cabinetmaking, and no philosophy of cabinetmaking except the ideal of being a good cabinetmaker, plus a body of lore relating to tools and to kinds of wood. For the rest, what there is to be learned must be learned by observation and practice. The only book on cabinetmaking I can imagine that might be of use to the practitioner would be a humble handbook.

The observations I have made in this chapter are of a scattered and empirical nature. The source texts to which I refer belong, of course, to the common language, but they are also specifically in ‘my’ English, the English I write. To the extent that the issues in translation on which I concentrate emerge from features of ‘my’ English, they are of lesser interest to students of translation in general. They have been identified in the course of exchanges with professional translators from English; they are reproduced and discussed here because they illustrate everyday difficulties of a practical nature that translators encounter.

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