

# The Co-ordinating Committee for Classics

John Hazel

The inspiration and initiative for setting up this new venture came appropriately from John Murrell and Lorna Kellett, successive Executive Secretaries of JACT. In the summer of 1988 Lorna, acting with the support of the JACT Council, wrote to her opposite numbers in the other bodies which share a concern for the future of classics teaching in this country. The response to this *démarche* was most encouraging: warm support was indicated by the ARLT, the Classical Association, the Roman and Hellenic Societies, and the Council of University Classics Departments. Lorna consequently summoned a preliminary meeting at which two representatives from each body were to attend under the chairmanship of John Muir, Vice-Principal of King's College, University of London, on 24th November 1988. There was also an HMI presence, in observer capacity. At this first gathering the problems facing Classics were coherently defined and the task facing the new committee was given an initial airing. In particular, John Muir gave a trenchant analysis of the difficulties confronting our subjects in the current situation. It was decided to meet again in a smaller group with one representative from each body in January 1989 and to consider at that meeting in greater detail questions concerning co-ordination of effort, the approach to the media, publicity, fund-raising, monitoring educational developments, especially the National Curriculum, and methods by which the committee could carry out its aims.

The second meeting took place in late January. The name of the Committee was ratified, and the role of a convenor/chairman was discussed; it seemed at first sight impossibly large, but after further discussion it was decided to appoint a single person with a strong image and communication skills to act as spokesman for the Committee and *ipso facto* for the various bodies under its umbrella: the person who, it was felt, had most distinguished himself already in waging a one-man campaign for Classics and who met with the universal approval and support of the representatives was Peter Jones, Senior Lecturer in Classics at Newcastle. It was resolved to invite Dr Jones to undertake this role. I also found that almost without realising it I had agreed to act as convenor/chairman, an office I embarked on with considerable trepidation.

It was in mid-March that the CCC really got going. Peter Jones attended our meeting on the eighteenth and brought an immediate sense of purpose and direction. He agreed to become our spokesman and to handle relations with the media, but also asked for certain elements of support which he considered vital. The first was some secretarial support: to pay for this for the first year at any rate the convenor was instructed to raise money from the constituent bodies and to act as hon. treasurer of the

Committee. Acting by rule of thumb in determining the respective contributions of the various constituent bodies, I managed to raise £1,400 which included a donation of £100 from the first 'Friend of the Classics'. The other request Peter made was that an approach should be made to the British Academy for its support; if the Academy agreed, we hoped to receive a representative of it on the Committee.

Our next meeting was attended by Professor Peter Parsons representing the British Academy, and by the President of JACT, John Thorley, who now became that body's representative on the Committee. The DES were also officially informed of our existence. We were greatly concerned by the future of Classics in Inner London when the ILEA is abolished in April 1990. The problem was passed on to the London Association of Classical Teachers which took the matter up with vigour. Peter Jones set up a well-equipped office at Newcastle University with secretarial assistance and fax and took on the media with great success. He also carried out an official Press Launch of the CCC in July: as a result of a short article in the *Sunday Times* reporting this, the 'Friends of the Classics' came into existence almost by accident. They are a group of people who wrote in response to the article and indicated their willingness to help the cause; they are, of course, not teachers of the subject. The list of members is capable of expansion, and the mobilisation of the 'Friends' is a project for the future. Richard Wallace, the CA's representative on the CCC, has since offered his good offices in getting the 'Friends' off the ground.

During the Summer of 1989 the setting up of a working group for the consideration of the National Curriculum in Modern Foreign Languages by the Minister of State became a matter of concern to the CCC. One of the members was actually interviewed for a place on the working group, but the difficulty of not being in the field of *modern* languages was insuperable. Fortunately there are those who combine modern language teaching with classics, and a person was appointed to the working group who heads the language department, including Latin, at a London comprehensive school. When the composition of the working party was announced in September, the Committee made contact with this person, Michael Roe of the London Oratory School, who attended our subsequent meetings.

As a result of these developments, the Committee discussed at some length what could at best be hoped for from the reports of the National Curriculum working groups, especially the one on modern languages. In the remit given to that group was a reference to cross-curricular themes and the support that various subjects in the curriculum can give each other, with a specific reference to

classical studies. There was also a reference to European awareness. On the instructions of the Committee I wrote in early November to the Minister of State, Mrs Angela Rumbold, asking for some recognition of the part Classics, and particularly Latin, can play in these areas. As I write, we are still very much *in mediis rebus* with respect to these negotiations, and it remains to be seen whether the working group will come up with anything helpful to us.

Another matter of concern to us is the value that employers place on classics graduates when recruiting staff. This question has been taken up by the CUCD who are finding funds to enable the appropriate research to be done in a rigorous way. We are happy that progress is now being made.

I think we may say that the first year's activity of the CCC has been successful, but we certainly have no justification for complacency. There is a great deal to do, and our resources of manpower and time are limited. We must not expect the unattainable from the Committee, but we can expect an improvement in our image, our ability to keep each other informed about our respective activities, and our readiness to take quick action when the circumstances demand. It has been impressive how the various bodies in the organization have rallied to support the CCC and how enthusiastically the representatives have thrown themselves into the task.

The Co-ordinating Committee is a pressure group: we want to exert what pressure we can and we want to encourage you, our colleagues, to see opportunities for exerting what pressure *you* can. Our Spokesman, Peter Jones, who is trying to build up a network of contacts in the media, will be happy to receive potential stories and to give advice to those who have potential stories. A potential story can be such a thing as a scholarly paper offering a new explanation for the fall of the Roman Empire – journalists do not come across such things naturally, and topics like the fall of the Roman Empire, or Atlantis, or anything biblical or sexual or generally dramatic which would hold the interest of the average *Reader's Digest* reader are winners – or a successful parental push to keep Latin going (parents = οἱ πολλοί, always an important point). Success can never be guaranteed in the world of the media, but we get nowhere unless we try! Peter Jones' private daytime number, with answer phone, at Newcastle University is 091-221 0382, and his private fax is 091-221 0345. Keep the lines humming!

JOHN HAZEL

Convenor and Chairman, the Co-ordinating Committee for Classics.

## How a cynic coped with stupid questions

- (a) When the end was near, Demonax was asked his wishes about burial: "Don't trouble; the smell will summon my undertakers." "But it would be indecent for the body of so great a man to feed dogs and vultures." "No harm at all in making oneself useful in death to anything that lives." Lucian, *Life of Demonax*.

Ne curae cuiquam sit nostri funeris ordo;  
Nam pollinctores ipse vocabit odor.  
Est tibi turpe viri praeclari triste cadaver  
Esse avidis canibus vulturibusque cibum.  
Iudice me vivis animalibus utilis (idque  
Laudandum est) etiam mortuus esse potest.

- (b) The skinny legs of old age are a commonplace; but when he reached this condition, Demonax was asked what was the matter with them. "Ah," he smilingly replied, "Charon must have had a nibble at them!" *Ibidem*.

Fert senio fessis exilia membra vetustas:  
Sunt Demonacti tenuia crura seni.  
Cur ita sit rogat insipienti, ridensque roganti  
Dicit; "rosit atrox haec mea crura Charon."

H. H. HUXLEY



*Poets that lasting marble seek  
Must carve in Latin or in Greek.*

EDMUND WALLER

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# Classical Education and Society in England in the First Half of This Century: Comparison with Germany

Barbara Olschewski

From the beginning of this century there have been constant observations on the decline of classical education in England from this time many attempts to save the classics. Optimism and pessimism among the classicists have alternated with each other. New or supposedly new theories of classical education have been brought forth. But only as late as from the sixties have real innovations in the teaching of classics at English schools taken place. Nevertheless, until the middle of this century, although no major changes took place in the way of teaching, the classics had a much safer place in the school curricula of English schools than in German schools. Whether this can be attributed to the so-called *vis of inertia* or to the cleverness of the classicists is a difficult question. There is some truth in both arguments. The aim of this study is to show that the classicists' justifications did not take place in a sort of vacuum of purely educational considerations – if a vacuum like this can exist at all – but that the discussion over the value of the classics took place in a close relationship with developments in state and society. With this aim in view this study provides a complementary aspect to the complex issue 'Education and Society', which over the last twenty years has aroused considerable interest among educationalists and sociologists. Whereas most studies in this field are concerned with the institutional patterns in social changes and try to show the connection between education and power, this study is concerned with the question of the social and political dimension of the contents and values of education, from the perspective of its political and social conditions and intentions. After some sociologically orientated works have established that educational processes, especially around the turn of the century, were not idiosyncratic national developments, but had their international parallels, and as there have been two fruitful studies now on classics and society in Germany,<sup>1</sup> a similar investigation into the English situation suggests itself.<sup>2</sup> At various points, therefore, comparisons with the German situation provide insights into similarities and differences as to the extent of political and social influences on the attitude of the classicists towards their position and function. Mainly it is left to the reader to form her or his opinion as to the way the classicists proceeded. At a few points, however, the author could not help taking a stand.

Whereas in Germany the classicists, or humanists as they called themselves, had already started to include

political and social developments in their justifications from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards. It was the time when Wilhelm von Humboldt designed his neo-humanistic plan in which Greek became 'National Education' – it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the English classicists began to justify their subjects at all. Although there have always – virtually since the inception of the classical system in education – been critical voices against the classicists or at least the dominance of the classicists in the curricula of the schools and although these had become rather insistent from about 1850 onwards the classicists practically took no notice of them, either not noticing the danger or relying on the strength of tradition. The only exceptions were Thomas Arnold, John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold.

The years around the turn of the century marked a change in the attitude of the English classicists. The main reason for this was the nationalization of secondary education and the political and social processes which caused the state to give up its *laissez-faire* policy concerning education. It was the realization that in spite of the economic advantages of the early industrial revolution over other European countries and the USA England's dominance in this respect had begun to dwindle. Furthermore the problems in the Boer War made politicians reflect on the efficiency of their political and social institutions including education. With the nationalization of education in this setting all the then existing school subjects and especially the classics, being the most established subject, had to think about the aims and objects of their teaching with respect to the national education system. In this situation the advocates of the natural sciences and also of modern languages who since the middle of the 19th century had tried, though not very successfully, to establish their subjects in grammar and public schools found new arguments for their cause and proclaimed the classics as the scapegoat for the lost economic predominance. The 'realistic' subjects were proclaimed as the salvation. Sir Joseph Norman Lockyer, an eminent scientist, argued this view:

We must arrange our education in some way in relation to the crying needs of the time ... We are in a world which has been entirely changed by the advent of modern science, modern nations, and modern industries ... The problem before us today ... must drive us to

the study of modern languages just as the modern world conditions drive us to modern science ... Latin is no longer the *lingua franca* of Europe, and we have better guides in science and philosophy than Aristotle.<sup>3</sup>

The Board of Education, if only for two years, accepted those demands so that the Secondary School Regulations of 1902 and 1903 created a scientific bias in the curricula of the school. This was the situation in which the classicists for the first time felt severely threatened and in which they started to take initiatives to organize themselves in order to reply to the demands of the 'realists'. The most obvious result of their initiatives was the foundation of the Classical Association in 1903, one of the main objects of which was 'to impress upon public opinion' the claim of [classical] studies to an eminent place in the national scheme of education.<sup>4</sup> The classicists realized very well that the educational opportunities were beginning to widen and that therefore they had to direct their activities at those who were to profit from the new national system of secondary education. This was a new public for them who had so far mainly been in touch with the privileged public and some grammar schools. Although this new state system provided far from equal opportunities for all, the classicists realized that they had a difficult heritage. J. W. Mackail stressed that it was the classicists' task to free the classics from 'a dead weight of indolent tradition and class prejudice'<sup>5</sup> and that their aim should be to bring the subject into the reach of common men. These considerations led to the tactically wise step to choose as a President someone who was not a professional classicist every other year. It must be regarded as a great merit of the English classicists that they set their minds on this new public. And they did not stop here, but they also demonstrated their disavowal of the old class character of a classical education by trying to make the classics familiar to adults, especially the lower classes. Thus they – or at least some classicists – became active in the Workers' Educational Association, delivering lectures at the Association's summer meetings. *Ancient Greece* was the heading of the summer meeting in 1908, in 1915 it was *The Genius of Ancient Greece and Its Influence upon the Modern World*. From the German point of view this was the most outstanding feature of the classicists' activities at the beginning of the century because this would have been unthinkable in Germany. There was the relationship between the 'humanists' and the social democrats who represented the workers was characterized by overt hostility. The 'humanists' even offered their services to the monarchical state suggesting that they could use the contents of their subjects in order to repel the ideas of the social democrats. Precise proposals as to which literature was appropriate to fulfil this aim were not made and could, in fact, not be made. But whereas the humanists at that time saw a deficiency here, we today regard it as one of the values and great advantages of classical literature that it provides all kinds of political and ideological views, so that one can always find examples of the opposite opinions.

As to the threats from the advocates of the 'realistic'

with a complete absence of antagonism.<sup>6</sup> This meant that the classicists did not insist on the *status quo* but attached a certain importance to these subjects, even granting them some school lessons which they could afford to spare because at the same time they planned an improvement in their teaching methods. This was a further important aim of the Classical Association resulting from the harsh criticism not only from natural scientists, but even classicists, that the teaching methods, which were centred around the formal aspects of the language and neglected contents, were obsolete. The classicists' way of reacting to the 'realists' demands was very different from the way their German colleagues handled the same problem at the same time. The pressure on the classics around the turn of the century mainly from the 'realists' was no idiosyncratic English phenomenon, but something that the Western European countries had in common. In Germany it was Wilamowitz who presented the solution to the threat from the natural scientists: he attempted to include the 'realistic' subjects in the classics by showing that any science, be it mathematics, technology, medicine, had its origin in Greece. This meant that he used the literature as vehicle from which to obtain scientific information. But thus he necessarily turned away from a) the poetry and (b) the other literature of the classical period. To realize this idea he designed the *Griechisches Lesebuch* which included excerpts from all kinds of scientific and philosophical literature. Although there was an attempt in England to adapt Wilamowitz' *Lesebuch* (E. C. Marchant, *Greek Reader. Selected and Adapted with English Notes from Professor von Wilamowitz-Moellendorfs Griechisches Lesebuch*, 1905), this concept of the classics was generally not accepted in England. The English classicists' main problems were that they did not want to give up the classical ideal and that they attributed to the classics a higher meaning than only an understanding of historical facts and developments. Sonnenschein's attitude seems to represent the attitude of most classicists as to this new conception:

The ... error ... of regarding the literature as so many documents of historical purport as to the state of ancient society and its relation to the modern world – is one into which Germany at present seems in some danger of falling, in so far as the authors are read for what is called their content or subject-matter – something which can be expressed in the form of a logical or historical proposition – to the neglect of their human aspects and their power of appealing to the feelings as well as the judgment. Hence the stress which is laid by Wilamowitz upon giving a complete picture of the Greek world and our own debt to it ... We have tried to avoid these extremes. What we stand for is rather the reading of Latin literature as it was meant by its authors to be read – if a history, then with an eye to the facts, the march of events, and the development of the historic sense; if a lyric or epic poem, then with an open mind for its power to touch the emotions and appeal to the sense of beauty.<sup>7</sup>

of their subject: 'True it is that science learnt to think and speak in Greek as she has seldom spoken since. But Greek science, like all science, is perishable in its content.'<sup>8</sup> In this respect the classicists did not claim any modernness for their subject, but rather stuck to the traditional values.

Their attitude was different with respect to the reproach that the classics did not have enough national and Imperial utility, usually also uttered by advocates of the realistic subjects. This criticism presented no problem for the classicists, though, who changed the argument to their advantage with the help of what I call 'lay classicists', i.e. politicians, historians, civil servants, imperialists etc. They were very active at that time in showing parallels between the Roman and the British Empire, employing the Roman Empire as a pattern of interpretation with respect to their own Empire. They were convinced that there was a lot to be learnt from the Romans, and this was used by Norwood and Hope as an argument in favour of a classical education: 'If we can [bring our boys ... into living touch with classical thought and teaching], we shall do no mean service to our country. There is no nation burdened with empire that has so much to learn from Imperial Rome as we.'<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in dealing with the Roman Empire, the protreptic aspect was not the only or even the most important impetus for the 'lay classicists': more important for them was to derive an affirmation of the existing English state by turning to the Roman Empire. *Greater Rome and Greater Britain* by C. P. Lucas was the typical title of a book written at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even the Classical Association started to show a remarkable interest in ancient Imperialism, and in 1909, the Earl of Cromer, an imperialist himself, became President of the Classical Association and made a speech about 'the analogies and contrasts presented by comparison between ancient and modern systems of Imperialism.' Although he mentioned some contrasts, especially as to the Imperialism of Athens, which was a failure, the similarities and analogies between the British and Roman Empire were much more stressed: 'At all events in respect to certain incidents, the world has not so very much changed in two thousand years.'<sup>10</sup> The interest in the Roman Imperial period was so great that even in history books there was a marked tendency to deal much more with this period than any others, so that the historian Heitland even had to give a justification for writing a book on the Roman Republic.

The First World War saw an intensification of the discussion of educational topics, which was, in fact, not unusual. It has often been observed that 'when nations undergo a period of crisis and reconstruction, education in general and the curriculum of the schools in particular became the centres of attention and controversy.'<sup>11</sup> Again the classics were at the centre of the educational controversy which during the war became much harsher than it was before. The advocates of the realistic subjects made the classical system at school responsible for some failures at the beginning of the war and expressed the need for more scientific instruction at school. To inform the public of this supposed deplorable state of school education some renowned natural scientists founded a Committee on the

Neglect of Science and published a propagandist article in *The Times* in 1916: 'Neglect of Science. A Case of Failures in the War.' In this article they accused the classicists of having made wrong decisions due to their lack of technical and scientific knowledge.

As an example of the ignorance which we deplore may instance the public statement of a member of the Government ... that his colleagues should be criticised for not having prevented the export of lard to Germany since it had only recently been discovered that glycerine (used in the manufacture of explosives) could be obtained from lard. The fact is, on the contrary, that the chemistry of soap-making and the accompanying production of glycerine is very ancient history.<sup>12</sup>

In a further article it was demanded explicitly that the classics should be removed from their privileged position. This invective against the classics caused a strong reaction not only among classicists, but politicians as well because they had been the main target of criticism. Like Cromer, Curzon, H. A. L. Fisher, Gilbert Murray and Walter Leaf answered the article in *The Times* with an article 'Neglect of Science' by an article on 'Limitations of Science. A Plea for tradition', which was a rejection of the demand for more science combined with a disapproval of the too materialistic attitude. Instead they stressed the necessity of an education in morals which in their view was represented by the classical system and which they considered of utmost importance for the future.<sup>13</sup>

A further reaction to these attacks was that the classicists now, in the same way as their German colleagues, started making comparisons between wars in antiquity and the present war. The Persian Wars, the Punic Wars, the Peloponnesian War became favourite topics. V. Ridgeway's address as President of the Classical Association in 1914 was full of supposed parallels. The purpose of pointing them out was less a didactic one, but more to create the feeling of self-complacency. The struggle between Athens and the Greek states against the aggression of the Persian King and the present war presented just a moment 'a pleasant comparison' for Ridgeway: 'Greece triumphed over the military despot once and again at Salamis.'<sup>14</sup> Even Gilbert Murray, who had pleaded for the League of Nations including Germany, found those comparisons a pleasant thing to make at that time, equating the Peloponnesian war and the present war and drawing a parallel between the Germans and the Spartans. He described the Germans as having employed 'the same tactical policy of sinking all craft whatsoever, enemy or neutral, which they found at sea.'<sup>15</sup> This comparison was, of course, deliberately abridged to ignore the Spartan victory. So Murray sacrificed the historical truth in order to have a pleasant comparison and thus he also demonstrated the obviously common feeling of national righteousness and complacency.

Furthermore there were some attempts during the war, but to a lesser extent than in Germany, to offer the teaching of classics as an education in warfare. A. Cruickshank, Professor of Greek and Classical Literature at the University of Durham, for example, recomme

to his students the Iliad, 'which though harder than the Odyssey is more suited to these days of international struggle.' And he demanded that 'in an age when civic duty is more and more impressed on us all, the *De Corona* should take precedence of the Private Orations.'<sup>16</sup>

At the same time there were efforts by the classicists and like-minded persons to offer the classics as a basis of international understanding, reminding the Europeans countries at war of their common origin. In the twenties and thirties these attempts became very intense, indeed, and must be seen as a part of many endeavours to find a cure for international enmity. Among these attempts there were, for example, H. G. Wells' *The Salvaging of Civilisation*, J. C. Maxwell Garnett's *Education and World Citizenship*, and, of course, the foundation and work of the League of Nations. The English were so enthusiastic about the League of Nations that even the Board of Education thought of how the aims and objects of the League of Nations could best be integrated into school teaching. Hence the endeavours of the classicists. Worthy of note here is Sir Frederick Kenyon's collection of addresses of various American and European statesmen on the value of a classical education. This collection, *The Testimony of the Nations to the Value of Classical Studies*, was to be the proof of an existing sense of solidarity among the nations based on the classics. For Kenyon it was particularly important

'that the speakers or writers are not professional advocates of the Classics, nor men associated by their careers with the teaching of them, but public men of light and leading in their respective countries, who approach educational questions with an eye, not on the manufacture of scholars, but on the training of a good citizen.'<sup>17</sup>

A further important contribution was made by the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who as President of the Classical Association said in 1925:

'Believing as I do that much of the civilisation and culture of the world is bound up with the life of Western Europe, it is good for us to remember that we Western Europeans have been in historical times members together of a great Empire, and that we share in common, though in differing degrees, language, law, and tradition. That there should be wars between nations who learned their first lessons in citizenship from the same mother seems to me fratricidal insanity. It should rather be our endeavour to help ourselves and to help each other to recover those qualities of character so peculiar to the Romans, the *pietas*, the *gravitas*, and the truth of the spoken word. On such foundations alone can civilisation stand.'<sup>18</sup>

This address was not only published in the *Proceedings of the Classical Association*, but was also brought within the reach of the general public by the *Manchester Guardian*. The Germans were very impressed by it, too, and referred to it as a striking example of the living English humanism.

In contrast to these attempts to present the classics as a cure for international feuding – but obviously not perceived as a contradiction by the classicists – was the

tendency to maintain for England and the English people a closer degree of affinity with antiquity, especially with the Athens of the fifth century, than for other countries and peoples. Though other nations did the same, the way the English emphasized this was striking because of the self-complacent tone those comparisons often had. This dichotomy appears most often in Gilbert Murray's works. In his study on *Aristophanes* (1933) he presented Aristophanes as a would-be fighter 'against our European war-fevers and nationalisms as he fought against those of his own country ...' Two pages later Murray presented similarities between England and ancient Greece which no other country in the world, according to Murray, had in common with them, those being 'laughter or humour' and 'their idealization of sportmanship'.<sup>19</sup> His lecture 'Greece and England', held in the Second World War, is full of supposed parallels, but this time the attempt to reach an international understanding was missing, understandably enough. Instead he drew parallels mainly on a political level in order to set off the English against the Germans:

'Freedom, free speech, toleration, and that willing acceptance of the law which is the usual corollary of freedom, are qualities as characteristic of Britain among the nations of Europe as they were of Greece among the nations of antiquity.' And more pointedly: 'Free Speech, Liberty, Equality before the Law, all the familiar Greek watchwords are our watchwords also.'<sup>20</sup>

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The second great area around which the justifications of the classicists were centred in the inter-war years was represented by the slogan 'Secondary Education for all', a movement, inaugurated by the Labour Party, and a result of a further democratization in many fields in English politics and society. Against this background the classicists continued their efforts to free the classics from their reputation of being a feudal domain of learning. The explicit aim was to bring all pupils, no matter of what ability, and also adults into contact with the classics; if not by learning the classical languages at least by bringing them into some contact with the classical spirit. Even the Labour Party supported the classicists in these attempts and they, in turn, emphatically referred to this support whenever they could. In the *Crewe Report* it was stressed.

'that the Labour party was seriously concerned with the fact that in industrial districts education is too much limited to utilitarian subjects; that there is a lack of opportunity for children of the working classes to get a classical education, by which many of them are well suited to benefit, and that it is therefore important that in each district one or more Secondary Schools should be in a position to provide it.<sup>21</sup>

In Germany the situation was very different indeed. There the Social Democrats were bitter enemies of the *Humanistische Gymnasium* and its form of education because of its imperial legacy. Furthermore the German classicists themselves, who during that time developed the so called Third Humanism, took a detached view of the Weimar democracy.

Now the way in which the English classicists tried to get the broad population into touch with the antique world was by writing books in which they traced back all fields of human knowledge to their ancient sources. This way of dealing with the problem was also furthered by a growing demand for more natural science in schools. Therefore the classicists in many books dealt with the antique sources of natural science, stressing its value for modern science, a later employment of the idea of Wilamowitz, but with the difference that the English classicists did not use it for the schools, but for adults, without the classical languages. *The Legacy of Greece, The Legacy of Rome, The Heritage of Greece and Rome*, to name only some titles, all appeared at this time.

When at the end of thirties the classicists realized that the number of classics students at the schools was steadily increasing, though only due to the increasing numbers of students as an effect of the Secondary Education for All-movement, there were no longer any innovative tendencies among the classicists as far as justifications were concerned. It was really only from the sixties onwards, after the foundation of JACT, that real innovations took place. What is most striking, in spite of all new ideas, is

that only as late as 1988 did the classicists discover the critical potential of their subject. The employment of the classics as an affirmation of the existing state was still a normal thing to do in the seventies. Only recently have we read: 'Any classical course should develop in pupils a more critical and reflective understanding of the world in which we live.'<sup>22</sup> This is the discovery of the *Chance des Unbehagens*,<sup>23</sup> of the opportunity of creating a feeling of uneasiness through the classics, which in my opinion is a much stronger argument in favour of a classical education than the argument that the classics offer 'a useful perspective from which to develop a European awareness and to approach some aspects of multi-cultural education.'<sup>24</sup> As long as there is an implicit feeling that the classics are not as up to date as other subjects the classicists will not be able to save their current position.

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#### NOTES:

- 1 For international developments see: F. K. Ringer, *Education and Society in Modern Europe*, Bloomington and London 1979; D. Müller, F. Ringer, B. Simon, *The Rise of the Modern Educational System*, Cambridge 1987. For Germany see: M. Landfester, *Humanismus und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt 1988; U. Preuß, *Humanismus und Gesellschaft. Zur Geschichte des altsprachlichen Unterrichts in Deutschland von 1890 bis 1933*, Frankfurt/M. 1988.
- 2 B. Olschewski, *Humanistische Bildung und Gesellschaft in England. Zur Geschichte der altsprachlichen Bildung von 1902 bis 1905*, Frankfurt/M. 1989.
- 3 J. N. Lockyer, The New Renaissance, in: *Education and National Progress. Essays and Addresses 1870-1905*, London 1906, p. 227.
- 4 Prefatory Note, in: *PCA* 1, 1904, p. 1.
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- 6 R. H. Collins, Presidential Address, in: *PCA* 1, 1904, p. 7.
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# Putting Catullus into English

Michael Bulley

This article is a condensed version of a lecture I gave in Guildford last year. Any readers who heard it then may find that some of what follows seems familiar.

## The effect of translation

When I was a sixth-former, studying parts of the Iliad and Aeneid, I thought Vergil superior to Homer. Years later, when it occurred to me to compare the two again, I decided, with all the provisos of cautious maturity, that my earlier decision was wrong and that Homer was the better poet. I wondered, though, why, as a schoolboy, I had formed that earlier opinion; and I think it was because Vergil could be put more quickly into impressive-sounding English. The rhetoric of Vergil gives the schoolboy's homework translation a sort of unjustified grandness, whereas a straight translation of Homer can be rather flat by comparison. This is borne out too, I think, by comparing the published prose translations of the Aeneid and Iliad.

This prompts the question of how a teacher, in a Latin literature lesson, for example, should treat the strange process of getting the pupils to say things in English when they are reading Latin, and how those English words, that are inevitably in the pupils' heads at the same time as the Latin ones, might be influencing their understanding of the literature, or, if you like, how the literature affects them.

The process of translation is certainly an odd one. I am told that in Modern Languages, up to GCSE at least, 'translation' is now a dirty word. In Classics, too, other methods of determining comprehension have been tried; but the most usual technique remains that of seeing whether the pupil can produce an English paraphrase.

I myself find this apparent necessity of translation very frustrating, and in a mood of fantasy I have sometimes wished that human anatomy were different so that the pupil's nose would light up automatically to indicate understanding of a Latin sentence. Such wishful thinking, of course, flies in the face of what understanding really is; from the illuminated nose you would still not know what sort of understanding had taken place.

When it comes to poetry especially, you are presumably not looking for comprehension merely on the level of factual content. If that were how even GCSE Latin literature were to be understood, it would make more sense to read Apicius' cookery book than the poetry of Catullus. Maybe in an age of increasing utilitarian values Apicius might be seen as more useful: the pupils would at least learn some practical skills. There could be dangers,

though; the recent capitulation by the London Examinations Board to complaints about the content of some of Catullus's poems suggests a possible misinterpretation by some teachers of Apicius' instruction to 'stuff a partridge'.

## Types of translation

Granted the necessity of putting Latin into English in the process of learning the language, we can distinguish various types: impromptu, prepared, examination unseen, homework translation and, lastly, translation that is to be judged on aesthetic grounds and not just for accuracy – perhaps even ignoring obvious accuracy.

If we take off-the-cuff translation in class, or when only the vocabulary has been looked up, I am tending now to be less worried if my pupils' English sounds stumbling and confused, as long as it is clear that they understand the Latin. In fact, it may be that the worse the translation from a stylistic point of view the less likely is the pupil to remember it and the more likely to remember the Latin words and sentence-structures.

An illustration of this last point concerns the opening words of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*. Many people who have read this in Latin are aware that in English it goes 'The whole of Gaul is divided into three parts'. They then reconstitute the English into something like 'omnis Gallia in tres partes diuisa est', which is, of course, not what Caesar wrote. How much more effective their Latin studies would have been if they were not sure what Caesar wrote in English (for, of course, he wrote nothing in English), but did know that in Latin he wrote *Gallia est omnis diuisa in partes tres*, which is a much more elegant and meaningful sentence.

A large part of this issue of understanding the Latin, rather than understanding what it means in English, is to do with word-order. To bring this to the fore, the teacher could, by way of variation, reveal each sentence of a Latin poem one word at a time, perhaps using an overhead projector, and then ask the pupils to review their gradual understanding once the whole sentence was exposed. This technique risks being tedious, but at least it prevents the dreaded injunction from the teacher 'Go to the verb!', which, irresistibly tempting as it is to get the pupil to continue the sense, is bound, I think, to subvert a grasp of the word-order and thus the relationships of the ideas in the sentence.

For prepared translation, of verse particularly, one possibility is for the pupils to learn by heart part of what they translate. Verse composition in Latin, too, can be an indirect aid to translation. I know that, for many, time is

against it, but just like some technical exercise in English verse, it can help towards a feeling for verse rhythm and the interaction of words and poetic form.

### Poetic understanding

I mentioned informational content earlier, and, clearly, what matters in literature is not only the facts or ideas that the author conveys, but also the tone of voice with which they are conveyed. It may be relevant, then, with some literature, whether or not the pupils have experienced a similar tone of voice in their own language. If some pupils are cold towards the grand rhetorical style in Vergil, this may be not an aesthetic or critical judgment, but just that they are being required to feel something in a foreign language that they have not yet felt in their own.

I do not wish to sound too pessimistic about the prospect of school pupils, or, indeed, anyone, getting the right idea about any Latin poetry. Of course, the poem itself can, unaided, have exactly the right effect on the reader or listener; its qualities can shine through without any need for critical commentary to boost the illumination. Even so, the school pupil, especially, seems to need the back-up system of a translation, and it seems to me that this is as likely to hinder poetical (as opposed to informational) understanding as it is to help it, particularly in a poet like Catullus.

Whereas we can usually be sure of general agreement about the grammatical details of a poem, it seems an inevitability, or even a necessity, of human communica-

tion that the vocabulary for describing the tone should remain vague. Long before explaining what sort of 'plaintiveness' or 'sarcasm' expresses, you will have resorted to reading more, louder this time and with more animation.

I remember David West, who is now the Latin at Newcastle University, making this when perhaps he was in despair about trying one of Horace's Odes to his students. He said 'the way you are going to understand this poem is to read it again'. This same idea was also remarked on by a twentieth-century philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who proposed the principle that the precise meaning of any sentence cannot be put into any alternative form than that very sentence itself. This appears to be a failure any attempt at translation; but I think that if we accept what is impossible, we can see certain advantages in translation as a means of interpretation. It is an idea that teachers of foreign literature have over teachers of English literature. I have yet to come across anyone who has tried to translate a foreign language to elucidate English literature for native English speakers.

Returning, then, to the notion of the 'tone' of a poem, we say that the tone of a certain Latin poem is 'plaintive' if we devise ourselves or come across an English version which seems to us near enough to have that XYZ tone. If not, then we have a way of presenting an idea about the tone of an important part of the meaning of the poem without actually having to define it in abstract terms.

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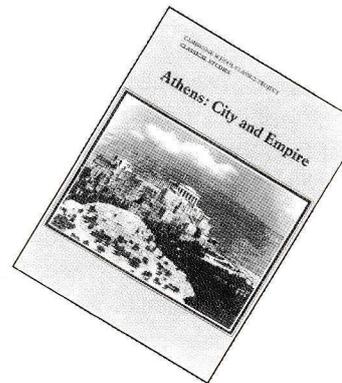
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comes to examinations, I wonder whether examiners would be happy to accept a very free, imaginative paraphrase, with perhaps a few explanatory notes, as evidence of a candidate's understanding of a passage, either for unseen translation or for stylistic comment. Surely, in the latter case, such a thing would be preferable to the usual paraphernalia of abstract literary criticism; but maybe the conventions of A-level marking are not yet ready for that kind of allusive technique. At any rate, I shall not take the risk of recommending it to my own pupils.

### Catullus in paperback

When it comes to translating Catullus, freely, imaginatively, or otherwise, the two most easily available translations are those by James Michie in the Panther edition and by Peter Whigham in the Penguin Classics. There have been others in the last thirty years or so, such as Goold (1983), Myers and Ormsby (1972), Swanson (1959) and Copley (1957), all different in style, but none with any qualities to nullify what I wish to say in general about Catullus translations. The one recent translation that obviously stands out from the rest is that by Celia and Louis Zukofsky. They attempt in their version to make the English actually sound word-for-word like the Latin. The usefulness of this attempt seems to me to lie solely in letting us realize that this is an experiment that should never be tried again.

If, in what I am going to say, I do not sound very enthusiastic about either Michie or Whigham, I think I should preface it by suggesting what may be one of the main causes. Both have produced attempts at poetical versions of the whole corpus. Perhaps that was a necessity for publishing reasons. The result, though, is, I think, that attention is spread far too thin for any of the versions really to hit the right note. There are one or two of Catullus' poems that have drawn me into trying to make a verse translation of them, but for the majority, I find it unlikely that I shall ever want to translate them into verse. It could be that I am lazier than Michie and Whigham; or maybe I do not think that the public will be better off with any translation of Catullus rather than none; but I do know that, for me, putting the whole of Catullus into English verse would take up far more of whatever life I have left than I would want to put into it.

Why should I think that Catullus, who is perhaps the most natural user of Latin among the poets, should be so difficult from the point of view of translation? It is to do with this idea of 'tone of voice' again. What we must get clear is that this, vague and difficult to define as it may be, is not an optional extra to the poem, like a superficial layer, but is really at the heart of it; the words in combination create this tone and it is this that affects us. I do not find quite so much of a problem in this respect with the other Latin poets, but that may simply reflect my poetic prejudices.

To refer again to Wittgenstein: he, as well as affirming that it is art, not science, that teaches us, and that the society that forgets that is very likely to go astray, saw this aspect of art clearly. He pointed out that, if someone to whom you had read a poem said 'I liked that poem. Read

me another on the same topic; it will do just as well', you would find that rather odd, because art does not work like that.

### Poem 6

Let us look at some examples. I shall not claim that I have any better ideas than the published translators, but this is just to show what does not succeed and why and, just occasionally, what does. Take poem 6, the brilliant send-up of tricky courtroom argument from silence. I should like to suggest the term 'performative poem' for one of the things Catullus achieves here, that is, the accomplishing by the very writing of the poem what he says in it he wishes to do. I have chosen this poem first, because it illustrates well the problems of 'tone of voice' in translation, the overall interpretation, and the question, which had a decisive outcome for some examinees last year, of whether some topics and words in literature should be deemed improper for school study.

In this poem we have the lines *cur non tam latera ecfututa pandas/ ni tu quid facias ineptiarum?*. Whigham has for this: 'Attenuated thighs betray your preoccupations', and Michie has 'Those exhausted shagged-out flanks/ Show you've been up to foolish pranks'. They are very different from each other, and both seem to me to be wide of the mark. Whigham's is too donnish; it lacks the easy familiarity that Catullus obviously has with Flavius; it produces a remote, lip-curling attitude. Surely the laughter in these lines is friendly and ribald? Whigham's turn of phrase, by contrast, would be just right from a real lawyer, who by disdain is trying to get the jury to laugh contemptuously at Flavius.

Michie makes things hard for himself by using rhyme, cornering himself into 'shanks/pranks'. This is ingenious, but it gives the wrong impression. 'Pranks' is a schoolboy word, and, I would say, now an old-fashioned one, conjuring up images of Billy Bunterdom. Michie's version sounds to me like a not too angry rugby captain ticking off his star wing three-quarter for leaving all his energy behind in the beds of his girl-friends. The poem is certainly to do with sex, and it treats it in a humorous way, but it is a seriously funny way; sex itself is not being viewed as naughty, in the style of the traditional English seaside postcard. Flavius and Catullus are 'delicati' – sophisticates – for whom sensuality and, particularly for Catullus, verbal sensuality are vital matters. I cannot believe that Catullus is accusing Flavius of indulging in 'pranks'; for, if nothing else, 'pranks' suggest showing-off, and much of the point of the poem depends on Flavius's temporary recluseness.

On this question of the overall interpretation, let me mention two points about the text. The first concerns the line usually emended to *nam nil stupra ualet....*. This may be philologically blameless, but has not much poetical justification, since it seems quite out of place for the feeling of the poem. Catullus's speculations about the 'febriculosum scortum' are meant to tease, not censure, but *nam nil stupra...* could not easily be taken so. Until the definitive version arrives, therefore, I propose, with no punctuation after the preceding *inambulatioque* and with

some doubts about the grammar, *istam praeualet ut nihil taceres*, meaning 'the bed's creaky voice and rocking from leg to leg convinces us that it was no good your keeping quiet about her'. The second point is the punctuation of the lines whose translation has been under discussion. Most editions follow the Oxford text and put a question-mark after *cur*, so that the line means 'Why? You would not be displaying...'. This makes it appear that Flavius's 'ecfututa latera' are open to view as evidence for Catullus' accusations; but this confounds the basic argument of the poem, that depends on Catullus's not knowing what Flavius has been up to, precisely because he is not there. The poetical, as opposed to the actual, purpose of the poem is to winkle Flavius out. I am sure the look of the well-used bedroom is intended in this way; that is, Catullus is saying 'I haven't actually seen your bedroom, but it must be as I describe it, the way you've been carrying on'. So I think we should read, without the first question-mark, *cur non latera ecfututa pandas..?* – 'Why wouldn't you be displaying...?'

Now we come to how to translate *latera ecfututa*. To remind you: Whigham has 'attenuated thighs' and Michie 'shagged-out flanks'. I hope I shall not be offending the sensibilities of people who, presumably, are reading this article voluntarily, if I suggest that it is only *latera* that is the difficult word, and that the obvious translation for *ecfututa* is 'fucked-out'. That must be the closest for us in Modern English to the sense of *ecfututa* for Catullus's culture. I hope I am not out of tune with the spirit of the time in suggesting that for readers of sixth-form age, at least, and above, one should have no hesitation in promoting and considering the obvious English equivalent in this case. If the present age is not sympathetic to me in this, I can only opine that, for the range of ideas acceptable in top-class poetry, 1st century BC Rome seems to score a point here over late-20th century Britain.

This example, discussed at some length, should serve to illustrate one principle of translating poetry. It is that, if the translation is intended as some sort of poetical equivalent to the original, then the translator should intend some correspondence between how he thinks the translation will affect the readers of it and how he himself was affected by the original. Lacking any hint to the contrary, we must assume that Whigham and Michie meant their translations in that way. My own conclusion, then, must be that there is too much of a difference in tone and feeling between their translations, of which the quoted examples are typical, and the original, and that, therefore, they did not understand the Latin poem. There are, of course, no rules in this sort of thing, and no objective decisions can be reached, but one can imagine the intentions of the translator and one should make subjective judgments about the quality of the translation.

### Further versions

Let us now look more briefly at our two translators' efforts at perhaps the most famous of Catullus's short poems, the 'odi et amo', No. 85.

*odi et amo. quare id faciam fortasse requiris.  
nescio. sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*

Michie has:

'I hate and I love. If you ask me to explain  
contradiction  
I can't, but I can feel it, and the pain is crucifixion.'

Whigham has:

'I hate and I love. And if you ask me how,  
I do not know. I only feel it and I'm torn in two.'

Michie is still stuck with rhyming ambitions, and puts a long abstract noun in the first line, 'contradiction', where Catullus only implies something self-contradictory. Whigham also tries to match *excrucior* with 'crucifixion'. Whigham's version does not really cope with Catullus' delicate grammatical contrast of active and passive, but I find it echoes the Latin much more than Michie's, which seems to me slick and glib, which, surely, Catullus' poem is anything but. You may, of course, disagree.

After this qualified praise of Whigham, let us look at a poem where his translation is a disaster and could possibly give anyone unacquainted with the original the slightest idea of it. This is the second sparrow poem. Here is an extract:

'closer (even) than the young girl to her mother,  
in her lap or at her breast  
hopping from one shoulder to another  
cheeping continually  
to its mistress alone

... has now hopped solitarily  
down that dark alleyway of no return  
evil shadows of the underworld'

Let us ignore, if we can, the image of the girl hopping across her mother's shoulders. What I suspect here is imitation of the layout and punctuation, and lack of punctuation, of the poems of e. e. cummings. Set against cummings' best poems how you will and they are still fine works. This, though, seems empty imitation and gives the impression that Catullus' closely organized poem is in fact a confused mess. Michie's version has some stiffness, but gets close to the elusive tone of the poem. Here are the final four lines from Michie:

'That was a pretty bird you took.  
Bad deed! Poor little bird – by dying  
See what you've done! Her sweet eyes look  
All puffed and rosy-red with crying.'

Catullus creates his particular effect in poem 3 through the deliberate over-use of longwindedness, prosaic expressions and exaggerated 'tweeness', especially through the use of diminutives. All of that implies, shouts out, rather, a joke and the joke has been explained, and, I hope, not killed in the process, most recently by Giuseppe Giangrande of London University and by Yvan Nadeau of Edinburgh University. They explain, in the style acceptable to scholarly journals, what many have taken for granted: that the sparrow poems are sexual allegories, the first on love-pleasure and the second on love-making. It is, by the way, through not seeing that that most commentators on poem 2 take *desiderio meo* in the difficult sense of 'my darling' rather

than the more natural one of 'my desire', which in this case is Catullus's desire, that needs *solacium* – comfort, or perhaps even relief.

Now let us turn to another famous poem that has had many imitators, No. 5, the kissing poem, *uiuamus mea Lesbia*. Here our two paperback translators are up against stiff opposition. There is Marlowe's 'Come with me and be my love' and Ben Jonson's 'Kiss me, sweet; the wary lover', but I prefer another version by Jonson, the song 'Come, my Celia, let us prove' from *Volpone*.

These are the opening lines of Michie's translation:

'My Lesbia, let us live and love  
And not care tuppence for old men  
Who sermonize and disapprove.  
Suns when they sink can rise again,'

The whole version seems to be an attempt at iambic tetrameters, but I can see no justification for the strong metrical dislocation as early as line 2. There are some more rhythmical lurches before the end, but we are saved from sea-sickness by the third line from the end, which is the flat 'And we've lost track of the amount'. If there were a competition to find a banal, rhythmless line, that one would be in the running for first prize.

I do not mean to be cruel with these remarks, but one's loyalty must be to Catullus, and I do not see how Michie's translation could lead anyone into a rapport with poem 5, except by the discovery of its virtues by comparison.

Whigham has more success; his has, at least, some of the lightness, the gayness, of the original. This is his ending:

'nor any can  
from envy of  
so much of kissing  
put his finger  
on the number  
of sweet kisses  
you of me &  
I of you,  
darling, have had.'

Now let us have a top-class poet's translation of a top-class poem. Some might argue that this cannot be counted as a translation, particularly because of the dramatic context and also because it omits the kisses and ends differently, but, as I intend to argue later, that does not really matter. This is Jonson's beginning:

Come, my Celia, let us prove  
While we may the sweets of love.  
Time will not be ours for ever.  
He at length our good will sever.  
Spend not then his gifts in vaine,  
Sunnes that set may rise again,  
But if we once loose this light,  
Tis with us perpetuall night.

Maybe, then, the best thing is to present both to the Latin-reading and non-Latin-reading public only the best translations of Catullus, even if that amounts to only a few poems, perhaps with explanations of what licences have

been taken with the Latin by way of factual content, grammatical structure, and so forth.

### Empathy

The last chapter of Thomas Wiseman's book, *Catullus and his Times*, offers very interesting glimpses of how Catullus has been treated by commentators and translators from the mid-19th century to the present, reinforcing one's suspicions that until fairly recent times the sort of person who was likely to be an academic university Classicist was unlikely to be the sort of person to think and feel like Catullus and thus to understand his poetry at all. At university, the recommended text I was told to buy was that of Fordyce, and I cannot to this day understand why Fordyce ever wrote his commentary on Catullus. Reading it is the most joyless of experiences.

While writing up these ideas, I came across a poem by G. T. Wright called 'On Translating Catullus', and this set me wondering whether, to translate Catullus well, you also need to empathize imaginatively with the poet's attitude to life. As G. T. Wright puts it, rather the other way round:

It's strange to think of Catullus as having my feelings  
Without my background. He'd hardly read anything,  
not a single line of the Romantic poets or Shakespeare,  
didn't even know English, which is almost a prerequisite  
for a poet who is me.

The dissimilarity between Catullus and what we might surmise of the life-style of most of his commentators could account for the gulf between the poems and what is said about them. From Fordyce's notes on poem 4, for example, you could learn a little about constructing a boat, but not much about constructing a poem. I once considered writing a similarly archaeologizing commentary on a well-known English poem; I thought of Larkin's 'Whitsun Weddings' and how my criticism would consist of learned notes on the routes of British Railways, wedding conventions in 20th century Britain, and the organization of the London postal districts.

There are notable exceptions to this in the academic world: I am much taken with W. R. Johnson's description in his book, *Darkness Visible*, of Catullus as 'turning, with something like the cultivated despair of a modern symbolist, towards an elaborate and beautiful nihilism'. Now, if your grasp of Catullus encompasses that idea, you are some way to understanding the Catullan view of life. A statement like Johnson's, which springs to one's attention amid all the earnest but fairly dull Catullan scholarship, gives me hope that there are others who see Catullus as a poet of the greatest importance, and makes me want to continue to try to persuade people not to be sidetracked by the apparent triviality of some of the subject-matter: the nihilism has much to do with the triviality.

If we have to get inside the poet to translate him, what does that mean? We must be careful here to avoid confusing the poet with his poetry and also to include both sexes. It means that you must imagine yourself as a man who, in his own culture, wants to write an elegant, witty poem

saying that unless Ipsitilla invites him round straight away, he will be forced to take his state of sexual excitement into his own hands. If you find it difficult to imagine such an attitude, you may not have the empathy to know whether your translation is satisfactory from a Catullan point of view.

### The purpose of translation

Also while writing this, I happened to read Peter Green's essay on translating Aeschylus. Although I agreed with Mr Green's assessment of the various translations, I disagreed with his idea of the purpose of translating. He sees the duty of the translator as that of conveying faithfully the attributes of the original, without worrying if the result sounds un-English. You can see what he means from his comments on Housman's and Leishman's translation of part of Horace Carm. IV, 7. This is Housman's version:

But oh, whate'er the sky-led seasons mar,  
Moon upon moon rebuilds it with her beams.  
Come we where Tullus and where Ancus are,  
And good Aeneas, we are dust and dreams.

Leishman:

While, though, waning moons can mend their celestial losses,  
we, when once we've fallen to where  
pious Aeneas and richest Tullus and Ancus have fallen  
linger as shadow and dust.

Green says that Leishman's is more Horatian, 'in its texture, rhythm and verbal usage closer to the original', and is to be preferred to Housman's, which is 'emotive responses which have nothing to do with the original at all'. My response to that is to ask which you would rather read, and I think anyone would be crazy to read Leishman's rather than Housman's.

Housman's lines above are a closer translation of Jonson's 'Come, my Celia', and it may seem that to understand the original, you need a close translation. I would maintain, however, that the best translation is one that strains to re-express their understanding precisely, to create poetical demands peculiar to the translation, and thus create a work that has a meaning of its own. This may differ from the original, but, having more poetic force than a subservient translation, will illuminate the original more, though not in an obvious way. I may be to contradict myself here with what I said earlier about capturing the tone of a poem, but that is not achieved by some apparent verbal fidelity, and, in any case, we prefer an imitation whose colours are as strong as the original's to a pale, more accurate, one.

This brings me to the final point, which is: what is the best translation for? Green sees it as for the reader who does not know the language of the original well enough. He talks of the moral responsibility of the translator towards such readers, who have to rely entirely on the substitute. I have my doubts about that, since I am not that, sometimes with help from an expert, I have been able, without any verse translation, to grasp the sense

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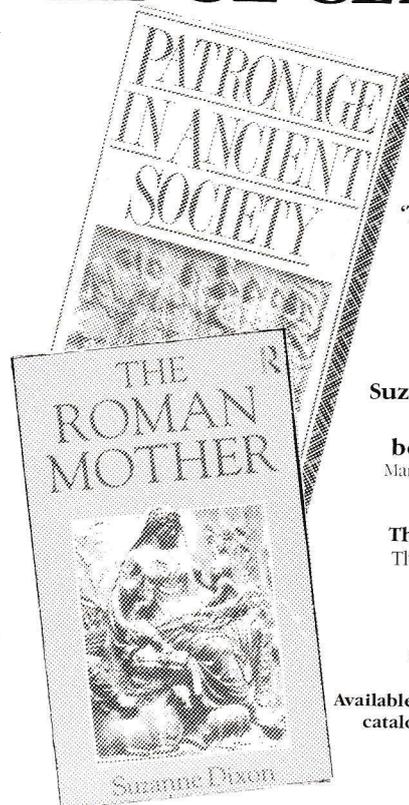
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poems in languages I am only vaguely familiar with. If the poems were in Chinese, which I do not understand at all, it would not matter whether the English poem was a translation. In those circumstances, the translation factor is irrelevant: I am just looking for a good poem. This is what I meant by wanting to read Housman's poem, not Leishman's. The principle is, then, that the starting-point for a poetic translation is the meaning, in the full sense, of the original, and if, to re-express that, you find the best means is, as Peter Green says we ought not, some traditional English verse-form, with all its historical associations, then all the better.

I see the verse translation, therefore, as having the principal purpose of being for those who can understand the original, not for those who cannot. It will act as an extra and different sort of critical commentary. Good criticism of a poem enables people who can read the poem to understand it better. Indeed, of course, reading literary criticism is pointless unless you have read the topic of it. Likewise, the good verse translation may sharpen or illuminate your sense of the original, or simply give you pleasure in seeing it in a different form, like one composer's variation on another composer's tune.

Finally, then, let me put my head on the block with my translation of poem 3:

Muses and Spirits of Love, make moan,  
And men of finer feeling.  
The death has occurred of a sparrow, my love's,  
The sparrow, the love of my darling.

She loved him more than her own two eyes;  
He was honey-sweet and knew her  
As mother is known to daughter.  
He never would go from his mistress's lap,  
Nor sing, as he hopped about hither  
And thither, his song to another.

O the shadowy road that he's going along  
Is a road with no returning.  
But may you have ill, ill shadows of Death,  
Who swallow up all that's charming.

You've stolen my charming sparrow away.  
Ill deed! O poor little sparrow!  
The dear little eyes of my love, through you,  
Are swollen and red with sorrow.

MICHAEL BULLEY  
Highworth School  
Ashford, Kent.

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### On a Lady's Wedding Being on the Twenty-First of December

Return'd from the Op'ra, as lately I sat,  
Indiff'rently chatting of this thing and that,  
My Chloe I ask'd how it enter'd her head  
To fix on St. Thomas, of all days to wed?  
To which she replied, with reason the strongest,  
"Tho' shortest the day is – the night, Sir, is longest!"

HENRY VAUGHAN, THE 'SILURIST' (1622–1695)

A Circo redii; prope est mea Lesbia, quam nunc  
Huc illuc volitant dum vaga verba, rogo:  
"Cur, mea vita, die Sancti vis nubere Thomae?"  
Sic ego, sic caro cara puella refert:  
"Nulla dies brevior, nec nox est longior ulla."  
Scilicet haec visa est optima causa mihi!

H. H. HUXLEY