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## ON TRANSLATING FROM ANOTHER CULTURE

WHAT IS THE TEST of a good translation? Presumably it is more than whether a translation provides merely the dictionary meaning of individual words; computers can do that. And presumably it is more than providing simply the literal meaning of individual sentences, for interlinear translations do that and none of them is regarded as particularly good. The criterion most often mentioned is whether a translation "preserves the flavour of the original". When the translation is from a culture very similar to ours—say, of a French or German work of the twentieth century—there is usually no real problem: we share enough common assumptions, or already know enough about the principal though minor differences in our cultures, to be able to respond in much the same way as the original audience did to the original work. But when the culture which the original work reflects is radically different from ours—either because of a great gap of time, as with Anglo-Saxon literature or with Classical Greek or Latin, or because of divergent origins, as with Chinese literature of the twentieth century—certain difficulties can arise.

Here, for instance, are a few lines as translated by F. B. Gummere from *Beowulf*, the early "English" epic written in eighth-century Anglo-Saxon:

So lived the clansmen in cheer and revel  
a winsome life, till one began  
to fashion evils, that fiend of hell.  
Grendel this monster grim was called,  
march-reiver mighty, in moorland living,  
in fen and fastness; fief of the giants  
the hapless wight a while had kept  
since the Creator his exile doomed. . . .  
Of Cain awoke all that woeful breed,  
Etins and elves and evil-spirits,  
as well as the giants that warred with God  
weary while: but their wage was paid them!

Here much of the diction is antiquated, resembling that used in the latter part of the Middle Ages, ranging, say, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Some readers would feel that the diction, being vaguely medieval, does preserve the flavour of the original poem. Does it, however, evoke in us the same response? Did the original words appear antiquated to the original audience? Did they feel that they were reading (or hearing) a poem written in a language used from five to seven centuries before? Presumably they felt that the poem was truly contemporary in its diction. Does a translation that emphasizes antiquated diction, really then "preserve the flavour of the original"?

There is also the matter of syntax. The lines immediately following in Gummere's translation will illustrate:

Went he forth to find at fall of night  
that haughty house, and heed wherever  
the Ring-Danes, outrevelled, to rest had gone.  
Found within it the atheling band  
asleep after feasting and fearless of sorrow,  
of human hardship.

This syntax has a certain alien quality to our ears. The original syntax would not appear alien to the original audience. Then should a translation?

The antiquated nature of both diction and syntax is further illustrated in the translation of Homer's *Iliad*, by Lang, Leaf, and Myers. The second paragraph of their translation begins thus:

Who then among the gods set the twain at strife and variance? Even the son of Leto and of Zeus; for he in anger at the king sent a sore plague upon the host, that the folk began to perish, because Atreides had done dishonour to Chryses the priest. For he had come to the Achaian's fleet ships to win his daughter's freedom, and brought a ransom beyond telling; and bare in his hands the fillet of Apollo the Far-darter upon a golden staff; and made his prayer unto all the Achaians, and most of all to the two sons of Atreus, orderers of the host. . . .

This is the language of the King James Version of the Bible. Did Homer address his audience in a language that was three centuries out of date? Does the use of "Biblical" English then "preserve the flavour of the original"? Does it make for a "faithful" translation? Or does it produce a never-never poem, such as issued from no poet and was received by no audience?

Similarly with verse form. Certainly a poem should be translated into verse, for otherwise a major aspect of the original—its poetic patterns of sounds and rhythms—will be lost. But which verse form should be used? Since Homer wrote in dactylic hexameter, many English translators have used English dactylic hexameter, although the English form is based on stressed syllables while the Greek is based largely on long and short vowels. Richmond Lattimore has used a free six-beat line in an effort to approximate the Greek form while still remaining recognizably English. It comes out like this:

Hektor stood up close to Aias and hacked at the ash spear  
with his great sword, striking behind the socket of the spearhead,  
and slashed it clean away, so that Telamonian Aias  
shook there in his hand a lopped spear, while far away from him  
the bronze spearhead fell echoing to the ground; and Aias  
knew in his blameless heart, and shivered for knowing it, how this  
was gods' work, how Zeus high-thundering cut across the intention  
in all his battle, how he planned that the Trojans should conquer.  
He drew away out of the missiles, and the Trojans threw weariless fire  
on the fast ship, and suddenly the quenchless flame streamed over it.

Such a line, it is submitted, is simply too long. One repeatedly trips over it; read in large numbers, it wearies; and one is painfully aware of the form at the expense of the content. Mr. Lattimore was certainly not dogmatic or doctrinaire about the form apart from the length of the line. As he says in his "Note on the Translation", he has "allowed anapaests for dactyls, trochees and even iambs for spondees. The line is to be read with its natural stress, not forced into any system" (p. 55). But, largely because of the very length of the line, one constantly looks about, trying to determine which syllables are meant to be stressed. It reminds one of the anonymous parody of Longfellow's hexameter: "Difficult always to scan, and depending greatly on accent". As a result of this uncertainty of stress, one is even more painfully aware of the form and consequently even less aware of the content. In other words, the verse form appears unnatural, even alien, and distracting. Did the original form appear in any way unnatural or alien to Homer's original audience? Was their attention distracted by it away from the content? Presumably not. Would it not be more reasonable then, and more in keeping with "preserving the flavour of the original", for a translator to choose his verse form, not with regard to what was the original form, but with regard to what will work best in the twentieth century? Should not the translator

be concerned with choosing a form which his audience would accept as "natural" to the genre of the work and which would accordingly allow them to pay more attention to what is going on in the poem?

The same difficulty can be seen even more readily in the translation of *Beowulf*. Its original verse form is a highly complicated arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in two half-lines stapled together by a kind of pile-driver alliteration. Gummere attempted a "faithful" rendering:

Thus seethed unceasing the son of Healfdene  
with the woe of these days; not wisest men  
assuaged his sorrow; too sore the anguish,  
loathly and long, that lay on his folk,  
most baneful of burdens and bales of the night.

Surely this verse form appears to us as either alien or quaint, and just as surely neither of these responses was the one evoked in the original audience, who accepted the form as perfectly natural and perfectly fit for heroic narrative. Would not some modified form of blank verse be more likely to arouse in us a response similar to that aroused in the original audience by the original form?

The reason for repeated reference to the "response" of the two audiences—original and modern—instead of to the "poem", is that a poem (or any other work of literature) exists, not on a printed page or even in the mouth of a speaker, but in the minds of the readers and audience. On the page are hieroglyphs; in the speaker's mouth are sounds; it is the mental response to these that makes the poem. This is not a piece of over-refined theory; it is a simple, observed fact that is worth remembering. For when one does remember it, one is reminded of the other, consequent fact that, making up the total mental response which constitutes the poem, is not only the set of stimuli arriving from the page or the speaker's mouth, but also a large number of individual responses emanating from the reader's mind—responses which arise when the new stimuli agitate his notions about literary conventions, the way life should be led, the ultimate meaning of life, and so on. When Homer described Apollo, for instance, his original audience would mingle, with what he actually said, their own concepts of what Apollo was, what he did, and how he should be described. It is this total, mingled response which makes up that passage of the poem concerned with Apollo.

It is also submitted that it is this total, mingled response that the trans-

lator should translate. The words that Homer used lend themselves to literal translation, but the concepts and opinions of Homer's audience—how does the translator go about translating those? Those concepts and opinions were the result of several years, at times of generations, of experience in a culture markedly different from ours: how are they to be translated into terms that the modern audience will appreciate?

At this point it is essential that we be clear about precisely who make up the audience for whom the translator is to exercise his function. They do not include the student of the original language, who seeks to use a literal translation as a crib or a dictionary: he attempts to come to grips with the original work itself and he will have to go on to put himself in the position of the original audience, knowing and appreciating their peculiar concepts and opinions. Also excluded is the antiquarian, who seeks detailed knowledge of the original concepts and opinions themselves: his concern is sociological, not literary. The audience for the translator comprises those readers who, reasonably well educated and reasonably widely read, wish to see what the classics in other cultures are about and, more especially, what it is about them that has made them classics—what their literary value is, why audiences over the centuries have enjoyed them and valued them. It is for these readers that the translator—the literary translator, if you prefer, as distinct from the literal translator—will try to find equivalents—equivalents for what was written originally and equivalents for the total responses that took place originally.

It has already been seen what happens when translators ignore the need to find equivalents for the concepts and opinions which the original audience contributed to the experiencing of the original poems. Although a free, six-beat line may come close to approximating the original Greek hexameter, and indeed Gummere's alliterative line may come even closer to approximating the original Anglo-Saxon, neither line comes anywhere near to evoking in the English reader a response similar to that which the original lines aroused in the original audiences, for the simple reason that our concept, convention, or opinion of what is natural to a given genre, such as heroic narrative, is radically different from the ancient Greek and the medieval Anglo-Saxon.

Not all translators have ignored differences in audience and convention. Many of them, in fact, have struggled manfully to find compensatory equivalents for aspects of the original work which, because of changes in concepts and opinions, could not be translated literally without distorting the original effect. It is always illuminating and often amusing to watch them.

Alexander Pope, for instance, when translating the *Iliad*, encountered one of the more amusing difficulties. There is a passage in Book XI in which Ajax is described in reluctant retreat, fighting a fierce and stubborn rearguard action as he slowly withdraws. To clarify the situation and to make the picture more striking, Homer compares Ajax first to a lion driven back from a cattle yard by dogs and farmhands, and then to an ass which breaks away from the boys in charge of him, eats his fill in a field, and finally consents to be driven back by their feeble blows. In a note to the passage, Pope praises the double image for its power of characterization, showing as it does the "undauntedness in fighting" and the "slowness in retreating" of Ajax and also the comparative impotence of the Trojans attacking him. But Pope could not use the word *ass*. As he went on to point out, quoting support from the French critics Dacier and Boileau, although the word for *ass* in Greek (and Hebrew) was noble, as was the animal itself, the word *asinus* in Latin and the word *ass* in English are utterly vile and contemptible, a term of the basest reproach. For this reason, and presumably also because of other meanings of the word, Pope could not write *ass* without completely destroying, for his fastidious eighteenth-century audience, the still heroic effect which Homer sought to create in his contemporary audience. Accordingly he used a circumlocution:

As the slow beast, with heavy strength endued,  
In some wide field by troops of boys pursued,  
Though round his sides a wooden tempest rain,  
Crops the tall harvest, and lays waste the plain;  
Thick on his hide the hollow blows resound;  
The patient animal maintains his ground;  
Scarce from the field with all their efforts chased,  
And stirs but slowly when he stirs at last.

It is noteworthy that, although Lang, Leaf, and Myers use the word *ass* in their translation designed for a more tolerant twentieth-century audience, Richmond Latimore and E. V. Rieu (in his Penguin translation) both use the word *donkey* and thereby evade the issue, just as Pope did. Since the word *donkey* did not come into use until seventy years after his translation, Pope had of course to use a longer circumlocution. For doing so he has been ridiculed by literal-minded translators, but by thereby breaking faith with the literal meaning, he kept faith with the poetic meaning, since he found an equivalent that would arouse in his own audience a response as closely similar as possible to the response in the original audience.

Asses, along with some other animals, appear in another poem to bedevil translators. In Milton's Latin elegy, *Epitaphium Damonis*, the speaker seeks to emphasize the loneliness of men, each of whom will find only one genuine comrade out of a thousand other men. To achieve this emphasis, the speaker contrasts men with cattle, wolves, shaggy asses, seals, and sparrows, all of which can find comrades in each of their kind. Of these animals the wolves and shaggy asses have provided difficulties. William Cowper, translating the poem a few years after Pope wrote his "Homer", apparently felt constrained by the same fastidiousness that had worked on Pope, and simply changed the wolves and asses to deer and zebras. Two present-day translators, Helen Waddell and Edmund Blunden, have both chosen to reinstate the asses, though they both carefully prefix the word with "wild" so as to limit modern connotations as much as possible. But wolves have apparently risen in the world since Milton's day, for both modern translators have chosen to replace them with jackals, which certainly emphasize the contrast intended in the original. Especially since individually the various kinds of animals function solely as illustrations of the basic contrast, there should be few protests against the efforts of these translators to find equivalents that would evoke a total response as closely similar as possible to that evoked by the original.<sup>1</sup>

More central to their work are certain aspects of *Beowulf* which cannot properly be translated with full literal fidelity. The Anglo-Saxon heroes gather in the beer- or mead-hall and drink so much that they all fall into a deep slumber, in fact, a slumber so deep that they are not aroused when a huge, monstrous troll crashes through the door and tears some of their fellows to pieces. Frankly, the whole troop of heroes had drunk themselves into a stupor: but what they did was evidently considered admirable and heroic in the author's day, and moreover they did it in the principal public building of the kingdom—the equivalent of a royal palace. Obviously then if a translator is to arouse a response similar to that aroused in the original audience, he must find some terms other than "beer-hall" to describe the building and he will have to soft-pedal both the amount of drinking and the stupor it caused. The troll already mentioned causes further difficulty, as does the hero's last opponent, a dragon. Actually the troll is the least of problems, for—especially since the Anglo-Saxons had seen no more trolls than we have—the author was vague and indistinct in his description of it. If the translation is also vague and indistinct, there is a good chance that the modern audience can experience the same kind of mysterious terror at the troll's approach as did the Anglo-Saxons. But the dragon—how can it terrify, especially since it is a full-length,

shiny-scaled, fire-breathing dragon? Such a literary beast has come down in the world of late and by now it has become so tame, even domesticated, that it is an object of fun, not of terror. To translate detailed descriptions with literal accuracy would prevent any chance of its provoking the awe-striking fearsomeness that it possessed for the original audience.

These have been problems arising largely from inappropriateness of connotation. There is a still more radical version of the same problem in the *Iliad*. In Book XVI Achilles prays to Zeus, asking that Patroclus be granted victory against the Trojans and that he return safely. As translated by Lattimore, Achilles speaks thus:

“High Zeus, lord of Dodona, Pelasgian, living afar off,  
brooding over wintry Dodona, your prophets about you  
living, the Selloi who sleep on the ground with feet unwashed.  
Hear me.  
As one time before when I prayed to you, you listened. . . .”

As soon as Achilles begins his prayer, we, the modern readers, feel that he recedes to a tremendous distance: the description of Zeus, especially since it includes the “Selloi who sleep on the ground with feet unwashed”, appears markedly alien, and our total response is vastly different from that of Homer’s audience. A more recent translator, Christopher Logue, has chosen to eliminate the distance and therefore the difference. His translation of the prayer begins thus:

“Our Father, who rules in Heaven,  
Hallowed be your name.  
Because your will is done in Earth and Heaven,  
Grant me this prayer,  
As you have granted other prayers of mine,  
As you did grant me Agamemnon  
Humble in my stead.”

Some readers may object, saying that Achilles was not a Christian. Of course he was not, but that is not the point. By paralleling the Lord’s Prayer—but only paralleling it, not making his prayer identical with it—Logue achieves a number of things. He implies that Achilles regarded his God in much the same way as Christians regard theirs, he reminds us that Achilles is much more like us than unlike us, and he thereby evokes a total response in us that



is at least a great deal closer to the response in the original audience than is our response to Lattimore's translation.<sup>2</sup>

Intermingled with the problem of connotation in the translation of Achilles' prayer was the often crucial problem of intelligibility. What, for instance, does one do with proper names when they mean something in the original? To repeat the names in their original form, as is usually done, will lead to difficulties. At the beginning of Book XVIII of the *Iliad*, for instance, when a number of sea-nymphs gather in response to Achilles' call, Homer lists their names. Lattimore translates the lines thus:

For Glauke was there, Kymodoke and Thaleia,  
Nesaie and Speio and Thoe, and ox-eyed Halia;  
Kymothoe was there, Aktaia and Limnoreia,  
Melite and Iaira, Amphithoe and Agaue,  
Doto and Proto, Dynamene and Pherousa. . . .

and so on, for another five lines of impenetrability. William Arrowsmith, on the other hand, translates the names thus:

Seagreen and Shimmer, the goddesses Blooming and Billow  
and those who are names of the islands, those who are called for the caves,  
and She-who-skims-on-the-water, and Spray with the gentle eyes  
like the gentle eyes of cattle, naiads of spume and the shore,  
the nymphs of marshes and inlets and all the rocks out-jutting,  
and Dulcet too was there and Wind-that-rocks-on-the-water  
and Grazer-over-the-sea and she whose name is Glory,<sup>3</sup>

and so on in turn, for another seven lines of delightful and expanding imagery. Lattimore has looked to the original form, as he did with the metre, and has tried to reproduce that; Arrowsmith has looked to the effect produced in the original audience and has tried to re-voke it in the twentieth-century audience.

The problem of intelligibility takes a somewhat different form in *Beowulf*. In that poem there are frequent references to historical events with which the original audience were presumably familiar, but about which even the most specialized historian now knows nothing. A translator cannot even drop footnotes with explanatory material—if that were a desirable way of solving the difficulty—for there is nothing to put in the footnotes. If the references are retained as they appear in the original, they will only mystify,

and mystification was not the effect produced on the original audience. Rather than produce such an effect on his own audience, the translator would be better advised to omit such references altogether, where they are largely incidental, and to invent an appropriate and illuminating elaboration where they bear importantly on the main theme.

Such alternatives introduce two further important and contentious principles of translation: omission and elaboration. As mentioned, a translator may at times be forced to omit in order to avoid mystifying or bewildering his readers, and thereby irritating them, when such an effect was not produced on the original audience. He may also have to omit in order to preserve the *quality* of the original. Quality, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and a twentieth-century eye may behold differently from an eighth-century eye. *Beowulf*, for instance, presumably appeared to its original audience as a first-class poem. But it contains many passages that appear extraneous to us and also much repetition that appears needless—repetition of individual words and phrases, and, often indeed, of lengthier passages. Such aspects, in our minds, lower the quality of a work: does a translator do justice to the original if he “faithfully” includes such debasing aspects? Or would he achieve an impression of quality equivalent to the original if he omitted the irrelevancies and the repetition?

The other principle, elaboration, is probably even more contentious. Let us consider, for instance, the problem of representing a Greek god to the twentieth century. To the original audience, such a god was real and living: the mere mention of his name, perhaps with the addition of an epithet, was sufficient to arouse emotions of awe. Nowadays a Greek god is a myth, a bloodless shadow dimly discerned through the curtain of centuries—certainly not a figure to inspire awe. Or not such a figure unless the translator adds something to him which will act upon the twentieth-century audience so as to produce a sense of awe akin to that which tingled the spine of the Greeks. When translating the episode in Book XVI of the *Iliad* in which Phoebus Apollo intervenes in a battle to strike down Patroklos, Lattimore followed the original phrasing closely:

And Patroklos charged with evil intention in on the Trojans.  
Three times he charged in with the force of the running war god,  
screaming a terrible cry, and three times he cut down nine men;  
but as for the fourth time he swept in, like something greater

than human, there, Patroklos, the end of your life was shown forth,  
 since Phoibos came against you there in the strong encounter  
 dangerously, nor did Patroklos see him as he moved through  
 the battle, and shrouded in a deep mist came in against him  
 and stood behind him, and struck his back and his broad shoulders  
 with a flat stroke of the hand so that his eyes spun.

The principal impression created would appear to be one of injustice as a superior being takes an underhand advantage of a human warrior. Christopher Logue has used various devices to suggest something more:

Likewise Patroclus broke among the Trojans.  
 A set of zealous bones covered with flesh,  
 Finished with bronze, dipped in blood,  
 And the whole being inspired by ferocity.

—KILL THEM!

My sweet Patroclus,

—KILL THEM!

As many as you can,  
 For  
 Coming behind you in the dusk you felt  
 —What was it?—felt the darkness part and then

A P O L L O !

Who had been patient with you,  
 Struck.

His hand came out of the east,  
 And in his wrist lay eternity,  
 And every atom of his mythic weight  
 Was poised between his fist and bent left leg,  
 And it hit the small of your back, Patroclus . . .  
 Your eyes leant out.

Which translation is more spine-tingling? Which probably comes closer to producing the effect of the original?

A somewhat similar need to elaborate appears in Homer's description of battles. The following passage, again from Lattimore's translation of Book XVI of the *Iliad*, describes Patroclus' earlier attack on the Trojans who have captured a Greek ship:

Patroklos was the first man to make a cast with the shining spear, straight through the middle fighting, where most men were stricken, beside the stern of the ship of great-hearted Protesilaos, and struck Pyraichmes, who had led the lords of Paionian horses from Amydon and the wide waters of Axios. He struck him in the right shoulder, so he dropped in the dust groaning, on his back. . . .

This translation produces much the same kind of effect on us as that we feel when we watch Bobby Hull, on television, fire a slap-shot through the defence, past the sprawling goalie, and into the net. We respond in this rather vague and nonchalant way because we have very little idea of what it was like to take part in the kind of warfare in which the javelin was a most feared weapon. More especially we can imagine only dimly what it would be like to face the advance of a skilled and powerful thrower of the javelin and then to watch the trajectory of his javelin as it came through the air towards us. The Greeks knew and could imagine most vividly; they needed little prompting from the author. We don't know, we can imagine only dimly: we need a great deal of assistance from the translator. Christopher Logue supplies it:

Patroclus aimed where they were thickest.  
That is to say, around a Macedonian  
Chariot commander called Pyraechmes,  
Tough, one of Troy's best. But, just as Patroclus aimed,  
The ship's mast split from stem to peak—Aoi!—and fell  
Lengthwise across the incident.

Because the mast's peak hit the ground no more than six  
Foot from Patroclus' chariot hub, the horses shied,  
Spoiling his cast. Nothing was lost. God blew the javelin straight  
At Pyraechmes as he pitched downwards twenty feet,  
Headfirst, back arched, belly towards the Greeks—who laughed—  
The tab-ends of his metal kilt dangling across his chest.

Whether it was the fall that scared him,

Or the vague flare Patroclus's javelin made  
 As it drifted through the morning air towards  
 His falling body like a yellow-headed bird,  
 We do not know. Suffice to say he shrieked until,  
 Mid-air, the cold bronze apex sank  
 Between his teeth and tongue,  
 Parted his brain, pressed on, and skewered him  
 Against the upturned hull.

Now we know.

In each of these translations we are reminded that the total response of the original audience derives from two sets of stimuli, one coming from the author and the other coming, by association, from the remembered experience of the audience itself. When the modern audience cannot furnish approximately the same stimuli as the original (deriving, say, from ancient warfare and religion), then a translator must supply the deficiency by elaborating on the stimuli that come from the author.

It should now be evident that the kind of translation that is here advocated has not been generally practised for the past few generations. For centuries before that, however, it was very much the accepted kind. In the late seventeenth century, for instance, Dryden accepted it, practised it, and in particular defended it when, in his "Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles", he distinguished the three possible kinds of translation. Metaphrase, he said in 1680, turns an author word by word, line by line, from one language to another—it is the kind of interlinear translation now available for most classics (including Chaucer). This is at one end of the scale; at the opposite end is imitation, in which the translator forsakes both the words and the sense of the original whenever he so desires and—taking only a few hints from the original—writes his own poem on the same subject. This is what Pope did later with his *Epistle to Augustus*, addressed to George Augustus, who was George II of England: his poem is a parallel to the verse epistle which Horace wrote to the Emperor Augustus of Rome—only the names were changed to castigate the guilty. Similarly and still later, Samuel Johnson wrote his *London*, "in imitation", as the sub-title indicates, "of the third satire of Juvenal", which was concerned, of course, with a satirical portrayal of Rome. In between the literal, word-for-word translation and the translation in the form of a semi-original imitation is what Dryden called "paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never

to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too [may] be amplified, but not altered."

The kind of translation that Dryden calls paraphrase was, as already mentioned, the accepted kind for centuries. It gradually passed out of favour when the Romantic emphasis on originality as a *sine qua non* for poetry led poets, as a class, to abandon translation, leaving it to scholars. These people, being antiquarians, cherished the characteristics of form and minutiae of content for their own sake, quite apart from their effect on the audience, and sought to preserve them with as little change as possible. Thus we have Gummere's march-reiver and etins.

As the quotations from Christopher Logue and William Arrowsmith have indicated, the last decade or so has brought about a renaissance of the paraphrastic kind of translation which should be welcomed. There is certainly a place for literal translation (in the language class-room), just as there is a place for imitation; but surely the paraphrastic kind of translation that seeks to create responses equivalent to those created in the original audience comes the closest to fulfilling the desires of those readers who wish to experience as much as possible of the literary excellence of the original works.

The renaissance of this kind of translation has begun so recently, however, that the limits of some of its practices have not yet been ascertained and we do not know how much latitude will be granted the translator in his search for equivalents. The offering of equivalents for verse form, religious concepts, battle experience, and the like have already been noted. There are other aspects of works in other cultures about which, however, there might be disagreement as to whether they should be merely turned from one language into another or whether equivalents should be found for them.

One of these is well illustrated by the following lines from Logue's translation of Book XVI of the *Iliad*:

Dust like red mist.  
Pain like chalk on slate. Heat like Arctic.  
The light withdrawn from Sarpedon's body.  
The enemies swirling over it. Bronze flak. . . .  
The left horse falls. The right prances on blades,  
Tearing its belly like a silk balloon,  
And the shields inch forward under bowshots,  
And under the shield the half-lost soldiers think,  
*"We fight when the sun rises. When it sets we count the dead.  
What has the beauty of Helen to do with us?"* Half-lost,

With the ochre mist swirling around their knees  
They shuffle forward, lost, until the shields clash

AOI!

Lines of black ovals eight feet high, clash

AOI!

And in the half-light who will be first to hesitate,  
Or, wavering, draw back, and, Yes! . . . the slow  
Wavering begins and, Yes! . . . they bend away from us  
As the spears flicker between the black hides,  
The bronze glows vaguely, and bones show  
Like pink drumsticks.

And over it all,

As flies shift up and down a haemorrhage alive with ants,  
The captains in huge iron masks drift past each other,  
Calling, calling, gathering light on their breastplates,  
So stained they think that they are colleagues  
And do not turn, do not salute, or else salute their enemies.

These are highly effective lines, but very little of them appears in Homer. Logue has added to the original an account designed to satisfy a consuming interest of the twentieth century—the fate and feelings of G. I. Joes. Is Logue justified in making this addition? Homer's audience was interested solely in the heroes, the leaders of the battles, and cared very little—almost nothing at all, for the ordinary soldier. What justification is there, then, for including the ordinary soldier? This much: the original work was designed to satisfy the principal military interests of the original audience; should not a translation seek to satisfy the equivalent of those interests in the later audience; and when the equivalent interests are in fact broader than the original, should not the translator broaden the appeal of the work to satisfy those wider interests?

How far can the search for equivalents be pursued? It was mentioned earlier that many of the episodes of *Beowulf* prove embarrassing to the translator. How does one present fights with monstrous trolls and a flying, fire-breathing dragon to a sophisticated twentieth-century audience and hope to create an effect equivalent to that produced in the original audience? Just as one tries to find equivalents for the verse form and for the diction, for philosophical concepts and for methods of warfare, should one perhaps not try to find equivalents for the actions themselves, when these are far-removed from the comprehension of the twentieth century? Essentially *Beowulf* is

concerned with the heroic deeds of the leader of a small nation as he struggles first with fearsome and mysterious enemies who strike by night and then with a powerful marauder who, by air and by ground, lays waste various parts of the nation. Equivalents in the twentieth century would not be hard to find. The actions of an underground conspiracy come to mind, as do marauding raids of aircraft and armoured vehicles. But clearly a poem dealing with these would not be considered a translation of *Beowulf*: conventions have not yet changed so far as that.

Actually there may be no need to push the search for equivalents so far. An alternative approach appears in Logue's translation of Homer. In the passage describing the G. I. Joes, the reader no doubt noticed the phrase "bronze flak". In other parts of his translation, Logue introduces other terms that are startlingly twentieth-century. Achilles' mother had packed "a fleeced-lined windcheater" for him, the mercenaries were left to "do the mopping up", and Achilles with his spear

Prised Thestor out of the chariot's basket  
As easily as lesser men  
Detach a sardine from an opened tin.

Logue of course does not ask his reader for a "willing suspension of disbelief", nor does he expect that his reader will think he hears Homer "speak out loud and bold": it was Chapman, after all, and not Homer, whom Keats described as speaking that way. The reader is always aware of the fact that what he is reading is a translation, a translation written, moreover, for an audience of the twentieth century. So if along the way Greek prayers are succinctly compared to the Lord's Prayer, clusters of falling javelins to bronze flak, and various Greek terms to modern jargon, nothing is lost and much, in fact, is gained. Both the reader and the translator work on two levels at once, coming in response as close as possible to the original and at the same time observing in passing the remarkable similarities between the situation then and now. This sophisticated approach is one of the richest and most pleasing aspects of the renaissance in translation. It is to be hoped that our conventions prove flexible enough to accept it.

#### NOTES

1. William Cowper, *Poetical Works*, ed. George Gilfillan (New York: Appleton, 1854), II, 365; Helen Waddell, *Lament for Damon* (London: Constable, 1943),



- reprinted in *Milton's "Lycidas": The Tradition and the Poem*, ed. C. A. Patrides (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 22; Edmund Blunden, "Some Seventeenth-Century Latin Poems by English Writers", *UTQ*, XXV (1955), 19.
2. In effect Logue has translated, not words by other words, but a convention by another convention. For a discussion of analogous problems in translating Greek comedy, see William Arrowsmith, "The Lively Conventions of Translation", in *The Craft and Context of Translation*, ed. William Arrowsmith and Roger Shattuck (New York: Doubleday), pp. 187-213. Other essays in this volume, and the Introduction in particular, explore further the need to find literary equivalents rather than literal translations.
  3. From a BBC script by William Arrowsmith, quoted by D. S. Carne-Ross, "Translation and Transposition", in *The Craft and Context of Translation*, p. 25.

## THE WALL

*Giuliano Dego*

*(Translated from the Italian of Salvatore Quasimodo)*

Already on the stadium wall  
 among the cracks and tufts of hanging grass  
 lizards dart, like lightning;  
 and the frog returns to the ditches,  
 the ceaseless song of my distant village  
 nights. You remember this place  
 where the great star greeted  
 our shadowy arrival. O love, how  
 much time has fallen with the poplar leaves, how  
 much blood into the rivers of the earth.