

Making Virgil Strange

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The interpretation, reception and translation of Virgil through the years reveal many different Virgils. There are proto-Christian Virgils and the Virgil of the Pilgrim fathers; Catholic Virgils and Protestant Virgils; Royalist Virgils and Republican Virgils; Civil War Virgils and Restoration Virgils; Whig Virgils; Victorian Virgils; proto-fascist Virgils and anti-Nazi Virgils. In other words, Virgil has been appropriated for many different perspectives on the world. It is my contention that these appropriations involve assimilations which tend to erase the particularly Roman and Virgilian aspects of Virgil. In this paper I shall urge the importance of making, or keeping, Virgil strange, especially in the arena of translation.

This paper, then, concerns one aspect of the interpretation and reception of Virgil - the translation history of the *Aeneid* into English. It is a preliminary to a study of the translation history of Virgil into Russian, which I am

ly working on. Other scholars have discussed Virgil's translation history from various perspectives,¹ but here I am developing the work of Colin Burrow in his excellent essay in the *Cambridge Companion to Virgil* and of Theodore Ziolkowski in his book *Virgil and the Moderns*.² Burrow discusses Virgil in English translation and Ziolkowski discusses the reception of Virgil in Europe and America between 1914 and 1945. I shall start by raising some important issues about translation strategies. I shall then attempt to defamiliarize a very familiar passage - the opening 11 lines of the poem - before examining some English translations of the *Aeneid* to see how they map onto the spectrum of assimilation-dissimilation, and I shall conclude with a programme for a future translation of the *Aeneid* into English.

I start with a quotation from Ziolkowski on the inter-war interpretation of Virgil: 'Virgil's texts...became a mirror in which every reader found what he wished: populism or elitism, fascism or democracy, commitment or escapism.'³ In the case of translations, then, if Virgil is our 'mirror' and speaks to contemporary concerns, it seems that translators have been intent upon familiarizing and domesticating the text for their contemporary audiences - and perhaps that is how Virgil came to be 'the classic of all Europe', in T.S. Eliot's words.⁴ The problem here is that the process of familiarizing and

domesticating the foreign text tends to assume a transcendental humanism, which obscures or erases important differences between cultures and eras. This process tends to generate a translation which, thanks to its fluency, makes few demands upon the reader.

But consider what Nabokov said about fluency at the beginning of his 1955 discussion of translating Pushkin's *Onegin* into English:

I constantly find in reviews of verse translations the following kind of thing that sends me into spasms of helpless fury: "Mr. (or Miss) So-and-so's translation reads smoothly." In other words, the reviewer of the "translation," who neither has, nor would be able to have, without special study, any knowledge whatsoever of the original, praises as "readable" an imitation only because the drudge or the rhymster has substituted easy platitudes for the breathtaking intricacies of the text. "Readable," indeed! A schoolboy's boner is less of a mockery in regard to the ancient masterpiece than its commercial interpretation or poetization. "Rhyme" rhymes with "crime," when Homer or *Hamlet* are rhymed. The term "free translation" smacks of knavery and tyranny. It is when the translator sets out to render the "spirit" - not the textual sense - that he begins to traduce his author. The clumsiest literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest paraphrase.⁵

And Lawrence Venuti, a leading figure in translation studies, suggests that fluent translation strategies involve the effacement of the translator in the attempt to produce 'a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated'.⁶ Both Nabokov and Venuti are deeply troubled by the phenomenon of the invisibility of the translator, because it creates a false impression of direct access to the original and because it erases the difficulties and strangenesses of the original.

But this is not the only strategy available to translators. The choice was articulated starkly by the German theologian and philosopher Schleiermacher in a lecture delivered in 1813. He proposed that there are only two methods of translation: 'Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him.'⁷ The fluent translation does the latter, obviously, and can be seen as responsible for the many different Virgils that I catalogue at the start. Here, though, I want to make the case for the former, because I fear that fluent translations by 'invisible' translators enable people to assimilate Virgil's creation to their own concerns instead of engaging with the ways in which Roman culture was different from their own. In the end, this connects with whether you think sameness or difference is more important. Are we seeking to assimilate antiquity to the modern world, or are we bold enough to grapple with the dissimilarities? Are we self-reflexively looking to make the world in our own image, or are we prepared to face 'The Other' honestly and unflinchingly?

In the arena of translation, I believe that we can resist the model of familiarization and domestication by asking the translator to produce a 'foreignizing translation' which will indicate the difference of the alien text and the alien culture that produced the text. This we can do 'only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language' because a 'foreignizing translation' will necessarily draw attention to itself, to its own textuality.⁸ That means that it takes more courage, aesthetically, politically, commercially.

The challenge for my ideal translator is, how to foreignize the original text. In my view, this starts by truly reading the text as foreign, by allowing and acknowledging the very strangeness of the poetry. The process of reading for strangeness I connect with an important tenet of Russian Formalism, namely the principle that a central function of poetry is 'making strange', *ostranenie*.⁹ I therefore propose to analyze the task facing a translator who aims to defamiliarize the text, as a preliminary to producing a

demanding, rather than a fluent and facile, translation.

To show how this might apply to Virgil, I shall here take a very familiar passage - the opening 11 lines of the poem - and try to 'make it strange' in order to highlight the challenges these lines pose to the translator. Then I shall review a few English translations, dating from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, to see how these highlight the recurring difficulties of producing a verse translation of the *Aeneid* in English. And I shall finish by outlining the difficulties that English in particular faces - and that I believe an inflected language like Russian does not. My aim is to have you see these lines anew, lines which are not only familiar but also introduce issues central to translation and interpretation.

*arma uirumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Italiam fato profugus Lauiniaque uenit
litora - multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
ui superum, saeuae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum
Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae.
Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso
quidue dolens regina deum tot uoluere casus
insignem pietate uirum, tot adire labores
impulerit. tantaene animis caelestibus irae?*

There are four important features of these lines, all relevant to the translator, which I shall point out before I defamiliarize this text by focusing upon specific words.

First, the proper names. In a way these tell the story and pose a problem. As has been observed, Virgil has carefully structured his opening sentence to progress from *Troiae* (1) to its final word, *Romae* (7). This remarkable frame progresses through the logical sequence of the arrival in Italy (2), the foundation of Lavinium (2-3) in Latium (5) and the move to Alba Longa (7). The translator has to decide what to do with these proper names.

Second, the multitude of references to superhuman agency, in which Virgil lays out his whole religious system: *fato* 2, *superum* 4, *Iunonis* 4, *deos* 6, *Musa* 8, *numine* 8, *regina deum* 9, *animis caelestibus* 11. But English is particularly impoverished in this sphere, and not, I suspect, just because of the monotheistic/polytheistic divide, but because in our age of supposed rationalism we have all but lost a vocabulary for the supernatural. And yet the concentration of these Latin words here at the opening of the poem draws attention to one of Virgil's central questions - how humans fare in a world they cannot control.

Third, the loose syntactic structure. In lines 1-7, it is the long relative clause that contains the narrative: *qui...litora* expands upon *uirum*, then *ille*, tacked on to the relative clause with two participles, *iactatus* and *passus*, makes commentators struggle: Austin calls this a narration delivered in a parenthesis while Williams says the *ille* clause is in apposition to the subject of the relative clause. Tacked on to that, whatever it is, comes the *dum* clause, looking ahead to Aeneas's future foundation of a city and importation of his religion. The next link is *unde*, the reference of which is debatable: is it the man, *uirum*, i.e. 'from whom', a grandly archaic usage, according to Austin; or does it more narrowly refer to the derivation of *Latinum* from *Latio*? Lines 8-11 have a similarly loose structure. After the personal *mihi*, Virgil moves away into the story, or rather its causes, offering two alternatives with non-parallel grammar in the two indirect questions: the ablative phrase *quo numine laeso* and the

present participle *quid dolens*. The second phrase can readily be turned into a direct question, *cur dolet?*, but the first has commentators struggling, with Servius, Austin and Williams offering different interpretations.

Fourth, Virgil's use of repetition to draw attention to the central themes. Most important is *uirum*, in lines 1 and 10. Virgil's focus is upon his 'hero', who, incidentally, is not named until line 92, yet I notice that this crucial word appears in the accusative case both times. That connects with the next idea that gains emphasis through repetition, where *multum...iactatus* (3) is echoed by *multa...passus* (5) and similarly *tot...casus* (9) with *tot...labores* (10). The accusative case of *uirum* renders the hero the object and not the subject, the victim of the supernatural forces at play here, which test him again and again. The repeated words *multum* and *tot* accumulate the trials which he will endure. Lastly, the final word of the opening, *irae*, reinforces *iram* from line 4, with the significant shift that it is generalized from Juno to the plural. The themes emphasized by these repetitions are heroism, suffering and rage. All three have a contemporary resonance for us, in this post-September 11th world and all three evoke a kaleidoscope of ideas from the centuries intervening between Virgil and today, a kaleidoscope which helps explain the many different Virgils we meet through the ages.

If we now imagine ourselves as translators faced with this text, we can defamiliarize it by looking at the individual words.

- 1 *arma*: 'arms' seems too familiar by now, perhaps because of Shaw's *Arms and the Man*; maybe 'war' (justified by 8.114, where *arma* is the antithesis of *pax*) works better;
uirum: 'hero, warrior', connects with Roman ideas of masculinity, cf. *uirtus*, and echoes the first word of *Odyssey*, *andra*;
cano: I note the 1st person singular;
Troiae: takes initial position in its clause thanks to the postponed relative pronoun *qui*;
primus: what exactly does it mean? A translator needs to decide; and to give the idea prominence, because a claim to 'firstness' in the first line demands attention;
- 2 *Italiam*: its initial position in the line marks it as the destination;
fato: this superhuman agency poses a problem for us;
profugus: used only here of Aeneas; the combination of *pro* + *fug* may have a sense of movement;
Lavinia...litora: balances with *oris*, its synonym;
- 3 *ille*: archaic, according to Servius;
iactatus: mixes literal and metaphorical - Aeneas can be 'tossed' on sea but not on land;
- 4 *ui superum*: archaic genitive plural - how is the translator to refer to the gods?
saeuae...Iunonis: is the adjective surprising? how strong is it?
memorem...iram: the phrase personifies Juno's anger;
- 5 *dum* + subjunctive: this seems a good construction to articulate the hero's endurance;
urbem: importantly 'a city', not 'the city' (i.e. not Rome);
- 6 *inferret*: certainly means 'import something foreign' (cf. 8.11-12, *uictos...penatis / inferre*), but perhaps also with military overtones of attack;
Latio: picked up by *Latinum* - aetiology is important to Virgil and the translator will need to

reflect that fact;

genus: sc. *ortum est*; ‘race’ may work; ‘tribe’ sounds too primitive, evoking a vision of anthropologists in the field;

7 *patres*: ‘ancestors,’ but probably with a hint of ‘senators’ too;

moenia: not simply physical walls but representing the developed city, as at *Georg.* 2.534-5;

altae: used by Virgil of Rome only here - but is its reference physical or emotional?

8 *Musa*: another female superhuman agent;

causas: we should not ignore the plural;

8-11 indirect questions often pose a problem when translating into English; this is especially true here because of the double construction conjecturing an injury delivered to the queen of the gods or a resentment conceived by her;

numine: another superhuman element, a reference to divine power;

9 *dolens*: an unusual present participle; not ‘grief’ but ‘resentment’;

regina deum: another archaic genitive and another phrase from the pantheon, indicative of supreme power;

uoluere: literally ‘roll’ [along/onwards], hence ‘undergo’;

casus: a word that is always hard to translate: possibilities include ‘fall’ or ‘mishap’ or ‘calamity’; we have to decide whether or not to reproduce the plural;

10 *insignem*: English ‘remarkable’ captures the root *-sign-*;

pietate: raises a difficulty that persists throughout the poem, because there is no straightforward translation of the concept; here the reference is to Aeneas saving his father and the household gods from burning Troy;

labores: it is so easy to sound fustian with translations like ‘toils’;

11 *impulerit*: unusually the verb is followed by infinitives; we might note the strong pause afterwards;

tantae: this is a reference to quantity, not quality; these rages are huge;

animis: one of hardest words to translate; though most render ‘minds’, we might remember that this word also denotes ‘anger’ or ‘passion’ in its own right;

caelestibus: yet another word denoting the superhuman agents;

ellipse of the verb in this final question causes problems to translators: Milton at *Paradise Lost* 6.788 has ‘In heav’nly spirits could such perverseness dwell?’ where ‘dwell’ is too strong; after all, this idiom is simply the way Latin says ‘have’; i.e. ‘do sky-living minds have such huge rages?’

With these notes to remind us of the complexities of the task of translation, let us look at how some translators have tackled these issues. My approach here is to highlight successful and less successful features in some of the best-loved and most-used translations, starting with the three dominant 20th century translations, through which the majority of readers will meet Virgil for the first time. I hope it is understood that I do this in a spirit of constructive enquiry and not meanness; I wish to acknowledge strongly the difficulty of this task. I should also mention that I will not discuss Dryden’s translation, the

most renowned of all, not out of disrespect but because its tendency to expansion reduces its usefulness in this exercise. I shall however have something to say about Dryden later. First, then, the standard three 20th century translations, by C. Day Lewis (1952), Mandelbaum (1971) and Fitzgerald (1983).

C. DAY LEWIS

I tell about the war and the hero who first from Troy's frontier,
 Displaced by destiny, came to the Lavinian shores,
 To Italy—a man much travailed on sea and land
 By the powers above, because of the brooding anger of Juno,
 Suffering much in war until he could found a city
 And march his gods into Latium, whence rose the Latin race,
 The royal line of Alba and the high walls of Rome.
 Where lay the cause of it all? How was her godhead injured?
 What grievance made the queen of heaven so harry a man
 Renowned for piety, through such toils, such a cycle of calamity?
 Can a divine being so persevere in anger?

Lewis is to be commended for keeping the same number of lines as the Latin, but the texture is wordy and induces stumbling when the translation is read aloud. Specific weaknesses to my ear include the clumsy opening words, 'I tell about', the omission of *saevae* (4) and *Musa* (8), the singular 'cause' for plural *causas* (9), and the specificity of 'a divine being' for *animis caelestibus* (11), which mistakenly puts all the blame on Juno.

Less serious complaints are that 'the royal line of Alba' overinterprets the text (*Albani...patres*, 7) and that 'high walls of Rome' (7) switches *altae* from *Romae* to *moenia*. The separation of the indirect questions of 8-9 into direct questions may be hard to avoid, but it represents a departure from the Latin.

In Lewis's favour, 'hero' for *uirum* (1) must be right, as is 'frontier' for *oris* (1). The phrase 'displaced by destiny' captures well the alliteration of *fato profugus* (2) and 'march his gods into Latium' reflects the militarism that *inferret* (6) may convey. Finally, the religious vocabulary: 'godhead' is not bad for *numine* (8), though the English word is rarer and seems a little quaint, while 'renowned for piety' (10) works well.

ALLEN MANDELBAUM

I sing of arms and of a man: his fate
 had made him fugitive; he was the first
 to journey from the coasts of Troy as far
 as Italy and the Lavinian shores.
 Across the lands and waters he was battered
 beneath the violence of High Ones, for
 the savage Juno's unforgetting anger;
 and many sufferings were his in war-
 until he brought a city into being
 and carried in his gods to Latium;
 from this have come the Latin race, the lords
 of Alba, and the ramparts of high Rome.

 Tell me the reason, Muse: what was the wound
 to her divinity, so hurting her
 that she, the queen of gods, compelled a man

remarkable for goodness to endure
 so many crises, meet so many trials?
 Can such resentment hold the minds of gods?

Immediately we notice that Mandelbaum's translation uses many more lines than the Latin (a defect, in my opinion), but that it has a sense of rhythm entirely lacking from Lewis, which helps convey that this is epic poetry. Again, I start with defects: 'a man' for *uirum* (1) is simply not strong enough: this is not just any man. Mandelbaum breaks up Virgil's initial 7-line period, privileging the phrase *fato profugus* (2), 'his fate / had made him fugitive' by moving it forward. In lines 8-11 something similar happens: he loses the parallelism of *quo* and *quid* and he introduces a result clause ('that she...') which is not present in the Latin. The phrase 'until he brought a city into being' misses the 'could' of the subjunctive and strikes me as an odd way to render *conderet* (5), for which 'founded' is surely unavoidable, especially when talking of the Romans (or proto-Romans). Like Lewis, Mandelbaum turns the plural *causas* (8) into a singular, 'the reason'. He repeats the singular for plural in translating *tantae...irae* (11) as 'such resentment', at the same time making a worse error by using the qualitative instead of the quantitative adjective. Moreover, 'hold' strikes me as too strong for the idiom of line 11.

Felicities include 'unforgetting anger' for *memorem...iram* (4), 'many sufferings' for *multa...passus* (5), 'ramparts of high Rome' for *altae moenia Romae* (7), 'what was the wound to her divinity' for *quo numine laeso* (8) and 'remarkable for goodness' for *insignem pietate* (10). Mandelbaum's inventiveness in the religious sphere emerges when he renders *ui superum* (4) as 'beneath the violence of High Ones': this has the asset of reflecting the vertical dimension of *superum*, but 'High Ones' may sound too odd, even though I grant the need for forging an appropriate polytheistic vocabulary.

ROBERT FITZGERALD

I sing of warfare and a man at war.
 From the sea-coast of Troy in early days
 He came to Italy by destiny,
 To our Lavinian western shore,
 A fugitive, this captain, buffeted
 Cruelly on land as on the sea
 By blows from powers of the air-behind them
 Baleful Juno in her sleepless rage.
 And cruel losses were his lot in war,
 Till he could found a city and bring home
 His gods to Latium, land of the Latin race,
 The Alban lords, and the high walls of Rome.
 Tell me the causes now, O Muse, how galled
 In her divine pride, and how sore at heart
 From her old wound, the queen of gods compelled him-
 A man apart, devoted to his mission-
 To undergo so many perilous days
 And enter on so many trials. Can anger
 Black as this prey on the minds of heaven?

I will confess that this translation has long been my favourite for teaching the *Aeneid* in English because of the rapidity of the translation and the way it lends itself to being read aloud. It consequently was something of a shock to realize that it is not as close to the Latin as Mandelbaum's. One

immediately striking feature is Fitzgerald's focalization of the poem from a Roman perspective, with his addition of 'our' in the phrase 'our Lavinian western shore' for *Lavinia...litora* (2-3) and with 'bring home' as his translation of *inferret* (6). This focalization is not present in the Latin, but of course it is not needed by a Roman writer writing for a Roman audience. In places he adds explicatory material: the word 'western' explains the east-west movement of Aeneas's journey; 'behind them' interprets *ob* (4); 'from her old wound' explains the participle *dolens* (9); and 'prey on' in line 11 is an extraneous idea not motivated by the Latin text. The references to Aeneas all seem to pose problems: Fitzgerald's translation of *uirum* (1) as 'a man at war' is at once an intensification and limitation; he adds value to *ille* (3) with 'this captain'; 'a man apart' is a good translation for *insignem...uirum* if you know Latin, but otherwise confusing. I am not convinced that *primus* (1) means 'in early days' nor that in line 2 *fato* should be taken with *uenit* rather than with *profugus*. He breaks Virgil's long opening sentence at line 5 ('And cruel losses...') and omits completely *unde* (6), which Virgil uses to link *Latio* with *Latinum*. Moreover, 'Alban lords' captures neither the idea of ancestors nor the idea of senators in *patres* (7), and in the same line he transfers the epithet *altae* to 'the high walls of Rome'.

At the same time, there are some fine touches. He has 'fugitive' for *profugus* (2) (as does Mandelbaum) and he gives it due emphasis by postponing it. The repetition 'cruelly...cruel' acutely reflects Virgil's repetition *multum...multa* (3, 5), and his 'so many...so many' notices Virgil's repeated *tot* (9, 10). His rendition of *numine laeso* (8) as 'galled in her divine pride' is fine, as is 'trials' for *labores* (10); 'devoted to his mission', though a little wordy, captures the central idea of *pietate*. Finally, the religious language again poses a challenge: 'by blows from powers of the air' faces similar problems to Mandelbaum's 'High Ones' and deploys many words for the neat *ui superum* (4); 'anger / Black as this' seems to refer to the quality rather than the size of the wrath and introduces a metaphor not present in the Latin.

To seek a totally different perspective, I now scroll back to the 16th century, to the first complete translations of the *Aeneid* published in Britain, Gavin Douglas's translation in Scots, written about 1513 and published in 1553, and the first complete translation in English by Thomas Phaer & Thomas Twyne, published in 1584, of which Phaer wrote the majority.

GAVIN DOUGLAS¹⁰

The batalis and the man I wil discrive
 Fra Troyis boundis first that fugitive
 By fait to Ytail come and cost Lavyne,
 Our land and sey katchit with mekil pyne
 By forss of goddis abufe, from euery steid,
 Of cruell Iuno throu ald remembrit fede.
 Gret pane in batail sufferit he alsso
 Or he his goddis brocht in Latio
 And belt the cite fra quham, of nobill fame,
 The Latyne pepill takyn heth thar name,
 And eik the faderis, princes of Alba,
 Cam, and the wallaris of gret Rome alsua.
 O thou my muse, declare the causis quhy,
 Quhat maieste offendit schwa quham by,
 Or zit quharfor of goddis the dreary queyn

Sa feil dangeris, sik travel maid susteyn
 A worthy man fulfillit of piete :
 Is thare sik grief in hevynly myndis on hie?

This early translation, with its strong rhythm and rhyme as well as the Scots dialect, has a freshness to the modern ear, which doubtless derives from our unfamiliarity with Scots English of the sixteenth century, and I therefore find it a valuable tool for making Virgil sound strange. Whether or not these same effects worked on Douglas's contemporary audience, I cannot say. Fine turns of phrase that immediately strike me include his version of line 4: 'By forss of goddis' for *ui superum*, 'cruell Iuno' for *saevae...Iunonis* and 'ald remembrit' for *memorem*. He notices 'gret Rome' (*altae...Romae*, 7) and the plural '*causis*' (8). 'A worthy man fulfillit of piete' seems fine for *insignem pietate uirum* (10) and in line 11 I commend his translation 'Is thare sik grief in hevynly myndis on hie?' because he does not strengthen the question with an inappropriate verb.

But he misses Virgil's repetitions (*multum...multa*, 3 and 5; *tot...tot*, 9 and 10) and introduces one that is not present in the Latin when he echoes 'batalis' (for *arma*, 1) with 'Gret pane in batail' (for *multa...bello passus*, 5). In several places he introduces additions: 'from every steid' (steid = 'place'), 'of nobill fame', 'the faderis, princes of Alba', and 'drey'. He turns the opening verb into a future tense, 'I wil discrive', which to me sounds more prosaic than *cano*. But he nicely reflects the potential ambiguity of the Latin in line 2, with 'that fugitive / By fait to Ytail come', where the phrase 'By fait' can be taken with preceding noun or following verb. Less successful, to my mind, is Phaer's translation, which appeared in 1584 in a complete translation by Phaer & Twyne. The translation includes the apocryphal four lines prefixed to the *Aeneid*, which I reproduce here but will not discuss.

THOMAS PHAER

I That my slender Oten Pipe in verse was wont to sounde
 Of woods, and next to that I taught for husbandmen the ground,
 How fruite vnto their greedy lust they might constraine to bring,
 A worke of thanks: Lo now of Mars, and dreadfull warres I singe,
 Of armes, and of the man of Troy, that first by fatall flight
 Did thence arriue to lauine land, that now Italia hight.
 But shaken sore with many a storme by seas and land ytost,
 And all for Iunos endless wrath that wrought to haue had him lost.
 And sorrowes great in warres hee bode, ere hee the walls could frame
 Of mighty Rome, and bring the gods t'aduance the Romaine name.
 Now Muse direct my song to tell for what offence and why:
 What ailed so the queene of gods to dryue thus cruelly,
 This noble prince of virtue mylde from place to place to toile,
 Such paines to take? may heauenly mindes so sore in rancour boile?

This translation starts with the disadvantage, to the modern ear, of rhymed fourteeners, which soon seem to trivialize the content and detract from the desired epic dignity. There are additions probably motivated by rhythm and rhyme (as with Douglas above), such as 'with many a storme...ytost', 'that wrought to haue had him lost', 'for what offence and why' (an expansion of *causas*, 8), and 'thus cruelly'. Omissions include *ui superum* (4) and *saevae* (4); and I wonder why he uses the plural 'warres' for *bello* (5). Besides that, there are several errors here: 'of mighty Rome' in his tenth line is wrong, as the reference is to Lavinium, and so is 'bring the gods t'aduance the Romaine name' in the same line. In line 1, 'the man of Troy' shows that Phaer takes *Troiae* with *uirum*, against the consensus since at least Quintilian's time.¹¹ And in line 11, he adds a verb which introduces imagery not present in the Latin: 'so

sore in rancour boile'. Finally, on the deficit side, 'This noble prince of uertue mylde' for *insignem pietate uirum* (10) seems something of an overinterpretation, with inappropriate Christian implications.

In Phaer's favour, he has fine turns of phrase in 'by fatall flight' for *fato profugus* (2), in 'shaken sore' for *iactatus* (3), in 'endless wrath' for *memorem...iram* (4) and in 'heavenly mindes' for *animis caelestibus* (11). But this seems too little to counterbalance the defects of this pioneering translation.

I have taken these five translations in this sequence because I wanted to heighten awareness of the difficulties of these lines before coming to possibly the bravest attempt to translate the *Aeneid*, that of William Morris, published in 1876.

WILLIAM MORRIS

I sing of arms, I sing of him, who from the Trojan land
 Thrust forth by Fate, to Italy and that Lavinian strand
 First came: all tost about was he on earth and on the deep
 By heavenly might for Juno's wrath, that had no mind to sleep:
 And plenteous war he underwent ere he his town might frame
 And set his Gods in Latian earth, whence is the Latin name,
 And father-folk of Alba-town, and walls of mighty Rome.
 Say, Muse, what wound of godhead was whereby all this must come,
 How grieving, she, the Queen of Gods, a man so pious drave
 To win such toil, to welter on through such a troublous wave:
 -- Can anger in immortal minds abide so fierce and fell?

Before I offer some overarching comments, let me draw attention to a few specifics. Morris repeats 'I sing' at the start, which Virgil does not, but which may be justified in terms of asserting epic dignity in a literary tradition less accustomed to the genre than were Virgil's contemporaries. His translation of *uirum* (1) as 'of him who' is weaker than the Latin: we need a noun here. 'Thrust forth by fate' strikes me as excellent, conveying the movement implicit in *profugus* (2). The postponement and enjambment of 'First came' also works well to provide emphasis. In line 4, the phrase 'By heavenly might' is economical and exact; however, Morris omits *saevae* and expands *memorem* as 'that had no mind to sleep' which seems rather wordy and precise than some other renditions. In 'And plenteous war he underwent' (5), 'underwent' is good for *passus*, but the ablative *bello* is shifted in sense from the Latin, where it means 'he suffered much in war'. In line 6 Morris does well to link *Latio...Latinum* by using 'name' for *genus* to mark the etymology: 'whence is the Latin name'. 'Father-folk' for *patres* (7) sounds quaint and hobbit-ish (though it surely evokes a remote era); in 'walls of mighty Rome' the word 'mighty' unpacks *altae* (7) into a sense of pride. In the new sentence at line 8, Morris conflates *causas* with what follows, *quo numine laeso*, then separates this phrase from the rest of its indirect question (*quidue dolens regina...impulerit*), which unbalances Virgil's sentence structure. In this style of translation 'godhead' (in 'what wound of godhead') works better than it does in Lewis's more prosaic version, but line 8 ends with a clumsy and wordy expression: 'whereby all this must come'. I consider 'grieving' for *dolens* (9) an error - it certainly does not convey the right emotion - and 'a man so pious' similarly flawed: the important word *insignem* is reduced to 'so' and 'pious' cannot work because of its Christian tone. In 'such toil...such a troublous wave' Morris does reflect the repetition of *tot* (9-10), though 'such' is not the same as 'so many'; 'to welter on through such a troublous wave' seems imaginative, though it works *uolueret* (9) hard to supply both the weltering

and the wave. In the final sentence, 'so fierce and fell' is a strong interpretation of *tantae*, which denotes size rather than intensity.

Without expressing uncritical admiration for this translation, I want to defend at least the idea behind Morris's decisions. His choice of metre, the rhymed fourteenner revived from the 1584 Phaer translation, and his choice of diction is surely designed to make the *Aeneid* sound like an Anglo-Saxon poem, that is, old but native--the same kind of effect that Heaney aspires to in his translation of *Beowulf* perhaps. Hence, presumably, an expression such as 'father-folk'. If we take a closer look at the diction that Morris employs, we find a fair amount of evidence for this in words such as: 'ere', 'welter on', 'fell' (all in this passage) and, reading on, 'gleanings', 'heave aloft', 'clave', 'forsooth', 'heaped-up', 'wildfire', 'strait', 'eagr-swift', the archaic 'wend' and the third person singular in '-eth'.

In theory, Morris's translation should be successful. He has chosen a line-for-line translation, with five features that should assist the project: with a definite metrical form, with long lines that help the rendering into English (which needs more words and syllables than Latin), with rhyme to structure the verses and mark progression through narrative, with a diction that is not Latinate (there is barely a Latinate word here in opening lines) but very Anglo-Saxon, and with inventions designed to forge a new epic idiom. Yet most people would agree that Morris's translation does not work.

While pondering the difficulties faced by Morris and indeed by all translators of the *Aeneid*, I turned to a crucial document in the translation history of Virgil - Dryden's lengthy 'Dedication' to his 1697 translation. A repeated motif in Dryden's 'Dedication' is the inadequacy of modern languages to render Virgil's Latin. With customary acuity, he pinpoints the problems.¹² Emblematic for Dryden is the difficulty that *pietas* poses for all modern languages (page 286). He castigates English for its excessive number of consonants (319), 'the deadweight of our Mother Tongue' (329), while regarding French as equally inadequate (322). He regards the 'Teuton monosyllables' of English as precluding literal translation (329). He deplors the articles and pronouns of modern languages (330). And his final substantive point in the entire 80 page 'Dedication' is to defend himself for sometimes Latinizing (335-6).

Consequently, I have come to the pessimistic conclusion that the difficulties of turning the *Aeneid* into English are both profound and acute - and indeed very much as Dryden saw them, still. Among the essentials are a metre appropriate to the elevated genre of epic, a language that is not excessively secondary, that is, not subserviently Latinate, an inflected language flexible enough to create compounds from roots, and a tradition of poetry on grand scale that can deal with central cultural issues. It is not at all clear that contemporary English has any of these qualities. That is what has taken me to the study of translations of Virgil into Russian. There exists at least one 20th century translation into Russian, that of Bryusov, which appeared in 1933 and to my knowledge has never been out of print, which I consider highly successful because it seems to meet all the criteria mentioned above. My analysis of Bryusov's *Aeneid* will have to wait for another occasion in another venue. But my study suggests that it may not be possible to translate Virgil into English unless and until the time when we achieve our own epic idiom, the equivalent of Pushkin for Russians. And maybe that will not be possible until we achieve a greater sense of local or national community than

trends towards globalization imply.

But that does not mean we should not try. The key, I suggest, is not to fall into the trap of making Virgil too easy and too fluent, thereby assimilating him unthinkingly to our own perspective. Let us take our cue from Bryusov and from the Russian Formalists and remember to make Virgil strange. That said,

I conclude by offering my own first attempt, apprehensively and with a sense of respect for those who have been through this process before me.

I sing of combat and the hero who was first to come
 from Troy's sea-coast, fate's fugitive, to Italy and to Lavinian
 shores, a man much buffeted on land and sea by violence
 from powers above, because of savage Juno's unrelenting rage,
 and much he suffered too in war, till he could found a city
 and install his gods in Latium, source of the Latin people
 and the Alban fathers and the walls of towering Rome.
 O Muse, remind me of the reasons why the Queen of gods,
 her dignity offended, or resenting what, compelled the hero,
 remarkable for goodness, to undergo so many risks and face
 so many challenges. Do minds divine have such enormous rages?¹³

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NOTES

- ¹ See John Conington 'The English Translators of Virgil' in *Miscellaneous Writings of John Conington* ed. J.A. Symonds (London, 1872), vol. 1, 137-97; Gilbert Highet *The Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1949), 115-16; R.D. Williams & T.S. Pattie *Virgil: His Poetry through the Ages* (London, 1982); D.E. Hill 'What sort of translation of Virgil do we need?' in *Greece & Rome Studies: Virgil* edd. Ian McAuslan & Peter Walcot (Oxford, 1990) 180-8; and K.W. Gransden's excellent Penguin Classics volume, *Virgil in English* (London, 1996).
- ² Colin Burrow 'Virgil in English translation' in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge, 1997), 21-37; Theodore Ziolkowski *Virgil and the Moderns* (Princeton, 1993).
- ³ Ziolkowski (see note 2) 26.
- ⁴ T.S. Eliot 'What Is a Classic?' in *On Poetry and Poets* (New York, 1975) 52-74, at 73. As will be familiar, this essay started life as Eliot's 1944 Presidential Address to the Virgil Society.
- ⁵ Vladimir Nabokov 'Problems of Translation: "Onegin" in English' (1955), in *The Translation Studies Reader* ed. L. Venuti (London & New York, 2000) 71-83 at 71.
- ⁶ Lawrence Venuti *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London & New York, 1995), 1, a quotation from Norman Shapiro.
- ⁷ Taken from Venuti, 1995 (see note 6) 19-20.
- ⁸ Venuti, 1995 (see note 6) 20.
- ⁹ This was a concept articulated in the 1920s by Victor Sklovskii and developed by Roman Jakobson: see Victor Erlich *Russian Formalism* (New Haven, 1965) 176-81; the Jakobson quotation is from page 181.
- ¹⁰ This is the 1957 text of D.F.C. Coldwell for the Scottish Text Society. The following words in Douglas's translation require a glossary: katchit = 'driven'; mekil pyne = 'large effort'; steid = 'place'; fede = 'anger'; zit = 'still'; drery = 'horrid'.
- ¹¹ For Quintilian's reading see *I.O.* 11.3.36: he sees a pause after *cano*.
- ¹² In 'Safe Sex? Dryden's Translations of Lucretius and Juvenal', in *John Dryden (1631-1700): His Politics, His Plays, and His Poets* edd. Claude Rawson & Aaron Santesso (Newark & London, 2004), pages 139-57, I show how Dryden likewise goes directly to the crucial issues of translation in the cases of both Lucretius and Juvenal. In the quotations from Dryden that follow, I use volume 5 of the 1987 edition by W. Frost and V.A. Dearing.
- ¹³ I am very grateful to the Virgil Society for the honour they bestowed upon me in making me their President and for the attention they gave to my address in May 2003. I hope to develop my study of Virgil in translation considerably further and wish to thank the Society, and in particular the officers, for all their encouragement.