

THE VIOLET IN THE CRUCIBLE: ON TRANSLATING POETRY

BY

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GRAHAMSTOWN

RHODES UNIVERSITY

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I

I have chosen as my theme Shelley's metaphor: 'The Violet in the Crucible' which has intrigued me since I first read it. I have added—rather reluctantly, I admit—as an explanation and, maybe, as a contradiction: 'On Translating Poetry' of which I have a little personal experience and on which I have done some research.

I should especially like to confront you tonight with a question which has been touched on only rarely, but which seems to me rather important, namely whether a translator of poetry should be a poet in his own right.

May I from the outset, offer my apologies if I should, in the course of the lecture, refer too much to German literature and translation? The reason being not only that I happen to be in charge of the German Department, but that Germany, as the 'heart of Europe' with neighbours all around her, and because of the receptiveness of the German intellect and its capability of sympathetic understanding of the essence of foreign literature, has been and still is a translators' country.¹ As the Frenchman Edmond Cary stated: "At about 1928 Germany was without doubt the greatest translator-country of the world."²

Many figures of today's world literature, especially Scandinavian and Flemish authors, but also G. B. Shaw and others,

made their way through German translations, which formed the basis for many others.

After 1945, a new tidal wave of translations flooded Germany. There is scarcely one literature—from Finland to South Africa—which did not find its way to her. (It is only fair to add here that the English language has outstripped the German in conquering Far Eastern texts.)

The tremendous task of gathering this harvest into German barns was eased by the German language which lends itself to translation. Schlegel, the Shakespeare translator, found in it the right medium for his task, because it possessed, as he said, apart from other advantages, a multiple flexibility by means of which it was capable of adapting itself to the most different foreign languages, of following their turns, of imitating their metres, of stealing nearly all their tones.³ We may add the nearly unlimited capacity of this language to form new words, by derivation and especially by compounds.

Börne, the sharp and merciless critic of the German people, states of its language: "It is the faithful interpreter of all languages." And Savory who wrote an excellent book on translation, after admitting that English cannot be "an ideal language for translation", says: "The truth is that German [is] a language into which . . . it is possible to translate more faithfully and more successfully than any other."⁴

One could say, maybe with some exaggeration, that man does nothing but translate, starting in the cradle. As Hamann, one of the fathers of the Romantic movement, states: "To talk is to translate, thoughts into words, things into names, images into signs."

II

Translation in the common sense can be horizontal, i.e. from one contemporary language into another; or vertical, i.e. from Old or Mediaeval into Modern English; or both, e.g. Old Egyptian love poems into modern French.

Is translation possible? It seems doubtful if we have a look

at the thousands of languages and their often extreme differences. There are agglutinating Indian languages; there is isolating Chinese which puts one monosyllabic word next to the other; there are inflected languages. And look at the 'cousins' English and German: of the same origin and at the time of Christ still one language—how different they are today!

When it comes to single words, one soon detects that there are very few synonyms. One can find many other peculiarities, e.g. that the sun is a male word and 'being' in all the languages, except in German, where it is a female, and vice versa with the moon: a fact which gives a severe headache to translators of St. Francis' 'Hymn to the Sun'; or that Death is depicted in German as a male, e.g. as 'Freund Hein' by the poet Matthias Claudius, but as a female figure in the Romance languages.

In every language we find untranslatable words, like the Chinese 'Tao', the Indian 'dharma', the Hebrew 'kabod', the Greek 'logos' (see Faust's difficulties in translating it in Goethe's play!), the English 'gentleman', the French 'esprit', the Portuguese 'saudade', the Rumanian 'dor', the German 'Gemüt,' and many more. Small wonder then that there are very many opponents of translation who bluntly declare: "Translation is impossible!" I shall mention only a few, starting with Dante, who writes in his *Convivio*: "And yet everyone knows that nothing which is harmonized by the bond of the Muses can be changed from its own to another language without destroying all its sweetness and harmony."⁵ Wilhelm von Humboldt: "All translating seems to me nothing but an attempt to solve an impossible task." Grillparzer: "A poet cannot be translated." Ortega y Gasset, the Spanish philosopher, speaks in one of his most famous essays of the misery of translation.

Small wonder too that many people prefer the original text wherever possible. Friedrich von Stolberg even had the following words printed into his translation of the Iliad: "Oh, dear reader, learn Greek and throw my translation into the fire!"

If you add to all this the strange fact that in the 24 volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica you will not find even the *word* Translation, you are entitled to say: "What a futile

theme! Let's go for tea!" But the paradox is that, in spite of all the evidence against translation, it has been a necessity since the Tower of Babel and has been practised ever since.

There are positive voices as well. Ernest Renan, for instance, declared: "A work not translated is only half published." Roland A. Holst, the noted Dutch poet, gave a lecture on the value of translating. And you all know Keats' wonderful sonnet on Chapman's Homer (by the way one of the few recognitions of the translator's work of love, probably the nicest and most appreciative).⁶

The history of translation has not been written yet. It would be a tremendous piece of work, but it would make fascinating reading indeed. Queer as it may seem, even bad translations of masterpieces have made strong impressions on their readers and paved the way for their authors. Von Hammer-Purgstall, for instance, the great initiator and the first translator of the whole Divan by Hafis, impressed Rückert so much that he became the foremost translator of Oriental poetry; and also Goethe who responded with his famous volume "Westöstlicher Divan".

Apart from bad or mediocre translations which achieve success, there are also (even if it sounds incredible after all I have said) good, in fact great translations. I can mention only a few, real peaks in the mountain ranges of Translation: St. Jerome's Vulgate and Wulfila's Gothic Bible Translation, Luther's masterpiece and the splendid team-work of the Authorized Version: Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* by Voss and, especially topical this year, Schlegel's *Shakespeare*. Schlegel himself found the right word: *Shakespeare* had been received in Germany like a fellow-countryman though born abroad. One still likes to call him 'the third classical author' (i.e. next to Goethe and Schiller). This 'naturalizing' of a foreign author, by means of translation, is quite unique in world literature, I think.

There are, further, Arthur Waley's and Richard Wilhelm's rightly highly praised translations from the Chinese, in both cases the work of a life-time. There is Scott-Moncrieff's *Proust*

and Karl Eugen Neumann's monumental translation of Gotamo Buddho's speeches. It is not generally known that a number of works have been preserved not in the original, but only in translation. And there sits a German scholar in Oxford, Richard Walzer, whose life-work it is to trace Greek philosophy and medicine which is lost in the original language in Islamic sources.⁷

III

Millions of *poems* have been written since mankind's childhood, and millions still are written, even in our technical, scientific 20th century. There must be a strong, irresistible urge in man to express himself in verse: his faith, his love, his outer and inner experience.

What is poetry? Novalis stated in his 'Fragments': "What the essence of poetry consists of, that cannot be defined at all. It is immensely complicated and yet simple. Poetry is strictly personal and therefore indefinable. He who does not know and feel immediately what poetry is, cannot be taught any idea of it. Poetry is poetry."⁸ Another definition has become famous: Hamann coined it: "Poetry is the mother-tongue of mankind."

I shall try to add a few points: It seems clear that lyric poetry, as distinct from the more objective dramatic and epic work, is *subjective*, has a special connection with its writer, is carried by the poet's voice. Some of the most perfect poems are a dialogue of the poet with himself—think of Goethe's 'Marienbader Elegie' or Rilke's "Duinese Elegies", of Michelangelo's or Shakespeare's sonnets!

We are past the stage where one distinguished between content or sense or meaning on the one hand and *form* on the other. They are a solid unit where, at least in the really good poems, one cannot alter a verse, a word, a syllable, even a letter without doing harm to the whole. And it is generally and mostly not the What, but the How that counts.

Lyric poetry is originally *song* and it will always, to a certain degree, remain song: It is bound to rhythm, to melody,

to *sound*. Verlaine was not the first to call for sound, for music in the verses: "De la musique avant toute chose!" Sound plays an important rôle in theory and practice. Every poet has his own pattern of sounds. And because that is so, because the poet's time and people have an influence on his world of sound, and because we cannot separate meaning from sound, we have to add another barrier to translation when it comes to poetry: No sound body can be carried over from one language to another. And poems living mainly or entirely by sound—like some of the Romantic poets Brentano and Tieck or those by Swinburne—will suffer most in the process or are practically untranslatable..

Luckily, however, sound is not all. R. Wellek and A. Warren in principle exclude the possibility of a pure sound poem. And Maulnier says: "Poetry is not music, but language." We can state: It is not music as such, music in itself that does the magic work, but language changed to music, and (not to be forgotten) *rhythm* as a most important means; furthermore the symbol, the sub-conscious expressed by the poet.

When it comes to the question of *poetry translation*, one ponders over a sentence in a letter from Rilke to Gide: "It is rare," he says, "to be understood in poetry by another spirit that moves about and calms down in the element of another language".

And when it comes to the practical side of it, one would assume that next-door neighbours who have in common long political, cultural, and language history, would find it easy. That is true only to a certain degree, because even translations from Nether-German dialects into Dutch are no plain sailing, nor are translations from Dutch or Afrikaans into High German.

A much more difficult chapter seems to be Russian poetry, especially Pushkin. Maurice Baring, an Englishman translating from Russian, says: "To translate his poems into another language is as hopeless a task as it would be to try to change the melodies of Mozart into another medium, for instance, into colour or stone."⁹

Goethe's 'Faust', one of the masterpieces of world litera-

ture, has, with its many different forms of verse, rhythm, and rhyme, its sound magic, its hidden meanings and symbols, defied generations of translators in many countries.

We are on rather firm ground where German, English, French, Italian, and Dutch are concerned: In spite of all their peculiarities, these languages *are* related, have remained similar or again become similar by a centuries-old common way of thinking and by repeated neighbourly influences.

But even here the translator has a hard task when poets want to be and to remain difficult. Take Cocteau's word, for instance: "Poetry is a language apart, which the poets can talk without fear of being understood." Or Valéry: "There is no real meaning in a text." The language of the Symbolists leads away from the language of the day to a very tense and abstract concentration, sometimes including also elements from archaic sources. Poor Roger Fry took more than twenty years to translate 29 of Mallarmé's 64 poems and still had to state in his introduction that his work could be looked upon 'only as a preliminary attempt.'

I want to mention in this context some contemporary poets like T. S. Eliot, who has fitted his verses with his own foot-notes and commentaries; or the ultra-modernist e. e. cummings, who uses jazz rhythm and a slang dialect; or Pierre Jean Jouve, the cryptic poet.

The difficulties are at least as great when space and time between original work and translation become additional obstacles, when a common 'cultural mass' is lacking. Think of Dante and Petrarch on the threshold between mediaeval and modern times; or Horace's Odes; or Pindar's Hymns; or poetry of the Persians which is drenched with mystical metaphors; or Old Egyptian love poetry where the translator has to bridge 5,000 years and where he has no inkling of sound and metre, because he cannot yet vocalize the consonantal hieroglyphs.

There is the immense and incomparable Chinese poetry which is so fascinating to translators, even if they do not know the original language; where a translator has to do with inadequate dictionaries. There are the three different tonal heights; there are the many literary and historical allusions

(Chinese poetry often being a 'Variation on a known theme'); there are, last but not least, the 'pictures', the Chinese characters, which play for a Chinese reader such an important part in the appreciation of a poem, since they appeal to ear and eye alike—and which fall totally away in any European translation. In China and its literature, the translator finds himself in a totally different world!

From China, it is not far to Japan with its 31-syllable Tanka still written today according to the rules of 2,600 years ago; with its 17-syllable Haiku. Here, as in Chinese, word, verse, and poem have not only one apparent, exoteric, but also mostly several cryptic, esoteric meanings; and the unspoken, the hinted is more important than the clearly expressed.¹⁰

Confronted with all these difficulties: of different languages and cultures, customs and traditions; of distance in space and time, of different metres and verses, stanzas and styles, the translators have one consolation: that man has not changed through the ages, is, basically, not different from country to country, from continent to continent, that love and hate, fear and trust, the mysteries of life and death, macrocosm and microcosm have motivated him and still play their all-important rôles everywhere. There is, therefore, a mystical unity of all lyrical poems; every one of them is, as Schlegel called it, a 'hieroglyph of eternal love.' This Herder discovered when he collected folksongs from over the whole world; Chamisso expressed it when he published Indonesian Pantuns. And we feel this human relationship even when we read the extremely old Sumerian and Accadian hymns and prayers or Chinese poems as far back as the 12th century B.C. Rilke found the right verse for this phenomenon: "Ein für alle Male/Ist Orpheus, wenn es singt" (One for all times/It is Orpheus when there is singing).¹²

This consolation does, however, not remove the difficulties. A conscientious translator will try, in the first instance, to keep the tone of the poem; furthermore its rhythm and metre, its choice of words with all the associations and contexts; sound and metaphor; the structure and speed, the tension and dramatic expression of the whole. He has to listen to half-tones and

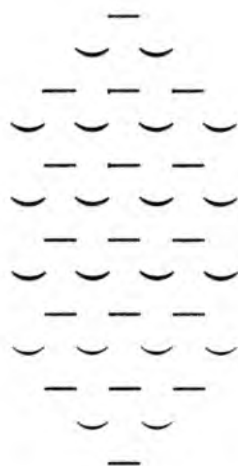
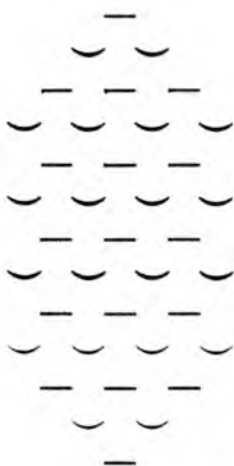
quarter-tones, to the finest allusions. It is evident that he cannot fulfil all these tasks or all in a perfect manner, that he has to sacrifice, to work with compromises, that he may give up in desperation.

And you will, I think (if you do not translate yourselves) accept Shelley's verdict of 'the violet in the crucible', which means that the poor poem loses shape and fragrance in the process; or Greshoff's sentence: "I have never read a translated poem which possessed the meaning, the value, the music, and the power of conviction of the original."¹³

In contradiction to this, I cannot resist the temptation to show you a German poem which has been translated into English—to what perfection, I leave it to you to judge: Here it is: Christian Morgenstern's 'Fisches Nachtgesang'='Night Song of a Fish'.^{13a}

FISCHES NACHTGESANG

NIGHT SONG OF A FISH



Chr. Morgenstern.

A. E. W. Eitzen*

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It must seem strange to you that I, a defender of translation, am acting here so vigorously the rôle of advocatus diaboli. And yet I want to add another point which really would require at least one special lecture, that is the question of *inspiration*.

In olden times, the poet used to be *vates*, seer, mouth of God or the Gods. His poetical work was given to him, was inspired. The closer we come to modern times, the more the poets lose their ties with God, the more they speak of *making* poetry (I mention Valéry and Benn). But there is no doubt that inspiration did exist and still exists: We have numerous examples of it, maybe the most striking testimony being that of Rilke about the creation of his 'Duinese Elegies'.¹⁴ It stands to reason that, if *all* poetry were inspired, it would seem absolutely futile for a translator to try any translation, inspiration being a unique experience to one single, chosen human being. How could he dare try to repeat it? But while we have wholly inspired poems by Goethe, by Mörike, by Rilke, there are others—and these are the vast majority—of which we know that they are the fruit of dedicated labour, maybe the first line only being 'given'. I remind you of Valéry's famous saying: "God gives the first verse, and it needs nothing less than all our combined resources to ensure that the second be not too unworthy of the first."¹⁵

Accordingly, the translator, with the full command of his language, can try to rival the original poet's efforts.

We can further speak of *inspiration even in translation*. Coverdale believed that translators of the Bible were as fully 'inspired' as the original writers—that was the conviction of Luther too. May I quote here, from our own times, Uys Krige: "Lorca se 'Klaaglied' het ek in 1937—tydens die burgeroorlog en ná Lorca se dood—vertaal. Ek het nie die minste moeite daarmee gehad nie. Dit was asof iemand anders vir my die eerste, tweede en vierde gedigte geskryf het. Binne 'n halfuur was aldie kant en klaar."¹⁶

I wish to mention in passing a few further aspects of the translation of poetry: *The first* could be the age-old battle, still waged, about faithful or free translation. I personally stand for the former and should like to mention Franz Rosenzweig's faithful translations of Jehuda Halevi's Hymns and Poems from the Hebrew into German which are not only extremely readable, but moreover a work of art, showing what can be done in this field by the right person. Rosenzweig himself says in his

Epilogue: "These translations do not pretend to be anything else but translations. Their aim is not to give the reader the illusion that the poems he is reading are by Jehuda Halevi and not by me, and that Jehuda Halevi is no German poet and no contemporary."¹⁷ (Professor Leishman's Rilke translations are most interesting also in this connection).¹⁸

The opposite view is well represented by the Polish poet Julian Tuwim's remark: "When I read a poetical translation, it does not matter to me whether it is a translation and from which language. The only thing that matters is whether it is a good Polish verse."¹⁹

The ideal would be, in my opinion, that the reader of a translated poem should not only clearly feel the individuality of the poet, but also the atmosphere of his country and people, and that it should still be an adequate poem in the new language.

A possible solution is—as has been done—to print the original text together with a word-for-word translation and one or more poetical translations next to it.²⁰

A *second theme* could be translation from Greek where again you get the 'faithful' and the 'free', the 'Hellenizers' and the 'Modernists', with a word on the doubtful English practice of using rhyme where there is none in Greek.

This brings us to rhyme as a *third item* and the almost universal French practice of avoiding it in translation, the practice of translating poetry into prose. This is, according to Herder and Schlegel, a poetical manslaughter. They are supported by some Englishmen: Lord Woodhouselee stated: "A translation of a lyric poem into prose is the most absurd of all undertakings."²¹ And Prof. Postgate declared as a cardinal principle: "Prose should be translated by prose, verse by verse."²²

Rhymes are question and answer, aims of the verses, pillars of a bridge; they are symmetry and echo, charm and magic; in them the soul of a poem can be embodied. To translate Rilke, the master of rhyme, without rhymes, really *is* manslaughter.

The case is different with bad rhymes and semi-rhymes, and especially with the Arabian mono-rhyme: Arabic is (like

Italian with its uncountable endings like -ano, -ino, -anza, -illo, -etto) a language in which it is almost impossible *not* to rhyme.

The question of rhyme naturally leads to that of *foreign* versification. Here, too, one should retain as much as possible of the original. While the German hexameter is only a half-brother to the Greek one, it has been firmly established by the Homer translations of Voss and is used to the present day in German poetry. The same applies to the ottaverrime, the eight-line stanza, to the sonnet, the terza rima, villanelle and, to a lesser degree, even the Arabian ghazel. Language can be made pliable and adaptable to many forms, first by a master and then by constant use. There is no doubt that the translators Luther and Voss, Hölderlin and George have considerably expanded the limits of the German language.

A last item to touch on here in passing is co-operation which has become the practice in many quarters: co-operation by translator and author if ever possible (or otherwise a fellow-countryman of his); by a poet and a linguist; by a man and a woman: like Willa and Edward Muir who obtained the first prize for translators of the German Academy; or brother and sister; or father and daughter; or a pair of lovers—who, in the ideal case, even represent the two languages. (The rôle of the woman translator is also most interesting!)

IV

So far we have dealt with language, poetry, and translation, but we have not quite approached that singular character trying the impossible: the translator. There is not one book yet to be found entitled: 'The Translator'. I shall venture a few remarks: The real translator apparently has a typical intellectual-artistic talent, a certain psychological disposition. He might be called a hermaphrodite: uniting a feminine conceiving soul with a masculine producing one. He is the real 'Liebhaber'—amateur—of course I do not speak of 'factory translators'! He is the most dedicated and at the same time most active reader of his

poet. After having read, he starts translating, out of pleasure, in order to play—not to idle away his time, but in a higher sense. This play does not lead to a solution like a cross-word puzzle, but it fascinates time and again, the more so, the more impossible it seems. This ‘play’ often develops into a question which may last a life-time. May I mention here the one case which seems to be the most pathetic: Milan Savic and his daughter spent 70 years in translating ‘Faust’ into Serbo-Croatian! After her father’s death, the daughter, in his life his devoted co-worker, took over and completed the work. It is, so far, the best translation in this language—and yet, ‘Faust’ ‘is still waiting for his master,’ as one critic has stated.²³

To serve, only and always to serve, is the motto of the real translator. He has no other ambition than to disappear, to make himself invisible, ‘to change himself to such a transparent crystal that one could say there was no crystal, as Gogol put it. A case in point is Count Baudissin who translated—what is scarcely known!—thirteen plays of the famous Schlegel-Tieck Shakespeare. He did not earn fame for himself either during his life or after his death. His name did not appear on the title page, nor even with the titles of the plays he translated—only in the concluding remarks of the last volume. And his fellow-worker, who had six plays to her credit, Tieck’s own daughter Dorothea, was never mentioned at all—only alluded to as ‘that younger assistant.’²⁴

What other prerequisites do we expect of a translator before he sets out on his task? He should be a master of two languages—with the stronger stress on his *mother-tongue*, into which he should, as a general rule, translate. He should have an intimate knowledge of the language from which he wants to translate, its people, its country. That seems desirable, especially in order to obtain the correct *tone* which was, for instance, missed in the Spanish translations of Heine and in the English translations of Brecht.

Apart from linguistic abilities, the translator should possess a wide range of knowledge, differing from case to case.²⁵

One gift seems to me the most important of all: the sympathetic understanding, the ability to feel himself right into

his author's self, to creep under his skin. That is not easy and cannot be forced. Therefore it often happens that a certain translator finds a kindred spirit, be he dead or alive, and sticks to him. Out of this inner contact between two souls, the real translations grow. I shall mention a few such 'pairs', the translators first: 'Constantijn Huygens and John Donne; Wieland and Lucian; Baudelaire and Poe; Claudel and Patmore; A. Roland Holst and Yeats. The Swede Malmberg who was an admirer and friend of Stefan George's translated him faithfully and in exemplary form. In Edward Muir's life we find exciting parallels to the outer and inner situation of his author, Franz Kafka.

The ideal, therefore, would be to translate from one language or even one author only. Even then, the translator will often not be able to translate all his poems. He must be free to translate only what suits him and to leave aside whatever does not appeal or proves untranslatable to him—even though it be great poetry. It has become the practice with anthologies to compile translations by different translators of the same poet.²⁷

V

I am coming to the last and main chapter of my lecture and repeating my question: Should the translator of poetry be a poet in his own right, You will often find the sentence: "Only a poet can translate a poet!" Actually, it has been demanded at different times by different people that a poet should be translated only by his equal. If this principle were to be applied consistently, there would be no translation of the masterpieces of world literature: Where would be found equals to Homer, to Dante, to Shakespeare, to Goethe? And even if the extremely improbable should occur and they could be found—would they be the right translators?—There should be no doubt that *translating is creative work*. Novalis writes in 1797 to Schlegel, after having read his first Shakespeare translation: "To translate is as much writing poetry as bringing forth one's own works—and more difficult, more rare!"²⁸

But even so, if you would answer my question in the affirmative, without qualification, I would beg to differ. May I

try to prove to you—for a moment over-simplifying—that a good translator is not a good poet and, vice versa, a good poet not a good translator? I do not for a moment want to make this a cast-iron principle. Of course, there have been good poets who, at the same time, translated well: Günther Eich, one of the best-known German poets of our time who had learned Chinese during his prisoner-of-war years and translated remarkably well, told me in a letter that it had been an interesting experiment which, however, he would not repeat.

If we agree that translation can be art; if we feel that the urge to translate is not less than the urge to write original poetry, we still have to come to the conclusion that to create original work and to re-create are two forms of poetical gift which seldom coincide fully or even to a satisfactory degree in one person. My contention is that there are born poets and born translators.²⁹

I do not want to go on chance observations, so I have had recourse to statistics. On my shelves there are 34 anthologies of translations by different translators, anthologies of world poetry, of national poets, of poems of a certain type (e.g. religious poetry), of a certain literary period (e.g. Symbolism), of a certain poet (e.g. Li-Tai Bo), etc. I have taken the trouble of extracting the names of all the translators and have tried to discover, from all reference works available to myself and to libraries and by many letters to the translators themselves, how many of these are not only translators but also poets in their own right.

I counted 918 translators. Of these only 320, i.e. 34.9% are poets, in which number I am including all the *poetae minores* and even *minimi*. Fifty-nine translators or 6.3% do not appear in any poetical anthology or other printed form at all, but of these I found a hint somewhere—often extremely slight—that they had written poetry. A third group consists of the 202 translators or 22.1% who are definitely no poets at all; and finally the fourth group consists of 337 translators or 36.7% whom I have not been able to trace. I hope you will agree that it is fair to add this group to the third. By classifying these 918 translators into two main groups we find that 41% are poets or so-called poets, and 59% translators only.

Thus the result of this investigation is: Three out of every five translators are not poets in their own right!

These are the figures I have derived from German sources. It might be interesting to study translations into other languages similarly. I have done a little, maybe not representative, investigation with English translations. The results point even more strongly in the direction I have indicated. In Mark Van Doren's well-known 'Anthology of World Poetry I counted 275 translators of whom 105 or 38% are poets, whereas 58 or 21.1% are not; 112 or 40.9% I could not trace. This result is the more remarkable since the Editor states very distinctly in his Preface: "This is an anthology of the world's best poetry in the best English I could unearth, and when I found no good English at all I left the poet out. Pindar, for instance, is absent from these pages."³⁰

Still more revealing are the two series of a publication called 'Translation (London)' where I found only 2 out of 25 translators to be poets in the first and 5 out of 60 in the second series, that is 8% in both instances.

But enough of statistics! Let us have a closer look at the human beings who make up the numbers—first some general remarks, and then a few 'test-cases'.

Normally, a full-blooded poet is seldom inclined (or capable) to be another's servant and to spend his precious time and poetical energy on work not really his own. Poets often do translations as 'finger-exercises' to get the necessary practice for original work. Of they do it when feeling incapable of original work, like Schiller repeatedly and like Rilke during those awful ten years when his poetical well had dried up.

Another trait which many poet-translators have in common and which I would like to call a rather general one, is the stress on the *formal* side in their own poetry—precisely the other gift that is especially needed by a translator: They write polished verse themselves, they are fond of writing sonnets, elegies, odes, etc.; but these poems are often mainly form. That holds true for the 'Poets' School of Munich' and others. Many of these poets are not original, but imitators, open to influences from many

sides, like the Dutch poet Eekhout or Longfellow, and therefore good translators. There are others who possibly are good poets, but whose translations are so poor that they are not worth considering.

So it happens that out of the 320 translators who figure as poets-cum-translators we could sort out only about 50 who have really made *some* impression in *both* capacities—they deserve one star. Of these 50 I would decorate 10 with a second and 6 with a third star. The big majority of 270, however, would form the starless Milky Way. The six three-star translators in my list are Hölderlin who translated from Greek (Sophocles and Pindar); George, Rilke and Schröder; and the two living poets Celan who hails from Rumania, lives in Paris, writes German poetry, and translates—‘celanizingly’—from Russian and other languages; and Krolow, also one of the leading present-day poets who translates from French, Spanish, and English.³¹

It is, in general, not the great poets who make the great translators. Most interesting is the case of Kleist: Twice (with La Fontaine and Molière) he tried to translate, but suddenly swerved and wrote his own work. And the Italian Leopardi stopped translating when he saw that a ‘great lyrical poet can never be a great translator.’³²

So much for the poet-translators. Now the ‘pure’ translators. Who are they? They also have a poetical gift, but it is different; it has been turned, consciously or unconsciously, in another direction. They are the ‘poètes manqués’, the frustrated or potential poets. Some wrote verses in their youth, but dropped that in order to translate. Jacob Hegner tells us: “I tried to write a poetical work on Narcissus. A friend came and brought works by Claudel and Jammes. We read. At that moment I stopped my own poetical work and thereafter only translated.”³³

This type of translator I consider so important that I would like to quote the testimony of two contemporaries:

Günther Debon, one of the best, if not the best present German translator from Chinese, wrote to me: “I have written

rhymes, with some pleasure, since my youth; but I have done nothing which seems to me worth publication."

And Karl Dedecius, probably the foremost translator from Polish and other Slavonic languages of today, also wrote to me: "I do not write poems, I only translate. I used to write poetry at school, but the war destroyed that, literally and figuratively. In captivity I learned to listen to what was foreign and to take myself less seriously. And I thought it more important to make audible a misunderstood literature, a small language, than to add one more poet to the existing legion."

Some translators keep on writing verses with the left hand, but it usually does not amount to much, whether they know this and want to know it or not, like Michael Hamburger, the excellent translator of Hölderlin and other poets, who came as a boy from Germany to England and who is, I quote, 'by some administrative error a poet' (D. J. Enright); he was awarded this year's translation prize of the German Academy. Some translators never wrote a line of their own verse, like Vossler who opened up whole territories of Romance poetry.

Klammer's early fame was founded on his translations of the whole of Villon (from which Brecht silently took some passages for his 'Three-Pennies Opera!'), of Rimbaud and Maeterlinck. One German critic called these translations 'the greatest lyrical event after the appearance of George and Rilke in the German literature.'³⁴ Klammer firmly denied being a genuine poet.

Regis, who did not write any poetry of his own, who lived a hermit's life in poverty, is one of the greatest translators, his masterpiece being the German Rabelais. His translation of Shakespeare's sonnets in 1836 still seems the best of the more than 50 German attempts—it has been reprinted in 1958.³⁵

Paul von Winterfeld was another hermit, living in one of the slums of Berlin; he gave to his people its mediaeval Latin poetry in exemplary translations and only once wrote verse of his own—when he was in love.

To turn to English translators: You may know that Chapman had a low opinion of his own verse and that up till now

his translation of Homer (to whom he felt a spiritual kinship) remains his main work; that FitzGerald 'wrote scarcely any original work';³⁶ that 'Asiatic Jones' was not a good poet, and Captain John Stevens apparently only a translator—but one of the best of his age. Dorothy Sayers did start with two small volumes of poetry, but her fame will rest (apart from her masterly detective stories) on her excellent translation of Dante (in terza rima, be it noted!)—a real work of love!³⁷

By far the greatest part of Shukovsky's poetical work consists of translations and comprises a whole world literature—with them he opened up the Western world for his fellow-Russians—whereas we have no great translation work by Pushkin, because he was too great an original poet.

And now the 'test-cases' starting with a few 'pure' translators. Unfortunately, I have, for lack of time, to leave out Luther³⁸ and to start with Herder. His father had already collected and translated Lettish folksongs. The son brought together, edited and published the first anthology of folksongs of all regions and times (he had coined the real word 'Volkslied'). Most of them he had translated himself from many languages. It was an epoch-making work which he simply called 'Volkslieder'. He was a model translator, had a genuine gift for language and languages, an immense general knowledge, a feminine soul, a nearly incredible capacity to creep under other people's skins—but he was not a poet, not even when in love! He wrote verses, but not one real poem! In his old age he realized and acknowledged this.

August Wilhelm Schlegel, whom his Shakespeare translation made immortal, did not have Herder's self-criticism and courage to declare that he was no poet. At times, he grumbled about being 'only a translator', and maintained till the last his ambition to be a poet as well. He also was born to serve. Already, as a student, he started translating. Typical of a true translator is his remark in a letter to Tieck: "I cannot look at my neighbour's poetry without coveting her, and so I commit constant poetical adultery." And in a letter to Goethe we read: "I had made it my business from my start as a writer to bring to light the forgotten and mistaken. So I went from Dante to

Shakespeare, to Petrarch, to Calderón, to the Old German heroes' song . . . and then to Asia."³⁹

And really, he in fact discovered Dante for Europe outside Italy at a time when Voltaire (who already had called Shakespeare funny names) called Dante a fool and his work a monster, and when Mme. de Staël found in the *Divina Commedia* 'much strength, but mistakes without number.'⁴⁰

And yet, this imitator in the best sense of the word, this genius of reproduction, this master translator was, in spite of his many sonnets, no original poet!

Somewhat different is the case of Friedrich Rückert: He did write poetry, thousands of poems. He was, in fact, most probably the German poet with the biggest lyrical output. But in spite of this, in spite of his being hailed, at his 75th birthday, as 'the greatest living poet, he was mainly a versifier who could put everything to verse and write verse much more easily than prose. German lyric poetry would not be much the poorer if most of it had never been written or published. There were instances of self-criticism; the 36-year-old wrote: "Let rather my poetry pass into oblivion . . . since I intend, with a smile about this discarded play-thing, to hang on the wall the wooden sword of poetry."⁴¹

Rückert was a language genius who knew no difficulties and learned Sanskrit, for instance, within three months of copying a dictionary which he could not afford to buy, as well as many other Oriental and Occidental languages; a master of form and a word creator; a re-creating, re-producing poet—in short: the born translator. He played a big part in gathering world literature into German barns: i.e. the riches of Arabian, Persian, Indian and some other poetries, as well as new verse and stanza forms. His translations are even today unsurpassed—he made the impossible possible.

And now, as a counterpart, a few poet-translators!

Rainer Maria Rilke has—one of the most astonishing phenomena of fame!—become a household word in poetry, in spite of sometimes barbaric translations. He has not only written verses in Russian, Italian, and especially French (four little

volumes), but has also translated from Russian, Danish, Swedish, English, Italian, and, again, especially French. These translations form one-sixth of his work. His language talent was practically unlimited. French was the language he spoke as a child, loved and admired as a man; and Paris was for twelve years the centre of his life.

But although Rilke took much trouble when translating and was extremely proud of his performances, he deceived himself and his countless fans, because he was unable to submerge his own strong self: His forceful poetical stream swept him away; he took, in an outer and an inner sense, possession of the original work; and so his translations became in most instances Rilke prose and Rilke poetry. That holds true for sonnets by Petrarch, Michelangelo, and especially Louise Labé: He dissolved this Renaissance Poetess' outer and inner form and made her a timeless woman.

Elisabeth Barratt Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' again became Rilke poems. Here we have to stand still for a moment longer: Rilke translated the whole sonnet cycle, although he mistook the poetess for another woman suffering from her love (which was, as you know, not the case) and although the English world—including Shakespeare—was closed to him, to him who was at home in the whole geographical and literary Europe. He knew very little England and had to work on 'raw' translations by two ladies.

These are the unacceptable working conditions for his translations from English. The result he himself would have rejected in the case of his own work: He discarded Elisabeth Browning's rhyme schemes, committed direct mistranslations and intellectualized the warm feelings of this loving woman.

His Valéry translations—the last in his life—form a special case. Rilke had recognised him as an antithesis to himself, and he felt the irresistible urge to translate him. The translations gave him the greatest and purest joy. But again: Though he maintained he had translated Valéry (I quote) "with such equivalence . . . as I scarcely thought possible between two languages,"⁴² his rhythm and tone, metre and expression are different, and Valéry's texts became Rilke poems.

Stefan George is a case similar to Rilke, and yet different. He too had a French background and he too was a genius in languages, having mastered twelve (French being the declared favourite) and invented one for his own use: *Lingua Romana*. In his lyric poetry, he was artful, even artificial, not so much original, and stressed the form. His translations from several languages form more than 40% of his poetical work. There are translations of ten poets in the very first issue of his exclusive private periodical, 'Blätter für die Kunst.' He acquainted the German people with Baudelaire's 'Fleurs du mal' after having worked on them for ten years, and he was instrumental in bringing contemporary Dutch poets to Germany, especially Verwey. Dante, whom he resembled to a surprising degree and of whom he believed himself to be a reincarnation, occupied him for 25 years. He translated all of Shakespeare's sonnets.

This shows that translation, which he did, in the case of Baudelaire (I quote) 'out of original, sheer joy in creating,' played a great rôle in his life. But his work had a very mixed reception: the highest praise from his disciples, and extremely sharp criticism from other quarters. One has to admit devoted and, at times, excellent work, like Verlaine and the 'Fleurs du mal' where he left out certain poems which did not appeal to him. George's 'Blumen des Bösen' are 'healthier' than 'Les fleurs du mal'. The 100 pages of the *Divina Commedia* which he translated he deliberately and carefully selected as fitting his personal style, but keeping the difficult terza rima throughout.

Generally speaking, one has to state that his personal and poetical style was too strong to be sufficiently subservient to the foreigner! Everything foreign was moulded to his own law, got *his* stamp. Poet and translator battled in him. He was more of a translator than Rilke, but still the poet got the upper hand.

The last case where the weight is shifted considerably more towards the translator is the *poeta doctus*, the learned poet Rudolf Alexander Schröder. Of his collected works four volumes with considerably more than 4,000 pages consist of translations, against only one volume of 900 pages of his own poetry, of which even a good deal is formal work: sonnets, odes, elegies, epigrams or Bible readings for every Sunday in verse form

and versified psalms. Even if he is still hailed as a great poet and in fact did write some poetry that may last, I venture to prophesy that he will pass into history as one of the great German translators and *not* as a poet. He gave us the whole of Homer, the whole of Virgil and the whole of Horace with whom he felt a special affinity; in addition, Corneille, Racine and Molière in German Alexandrines which had, especially in the case of Racine, seemed impossible for 200 years. These three Frenchmen became, by Schröder's efforts, naturalized in Germany again. He also translated ten of Shakespeare's plays, T. S. Eliot's 'Murder in the Cathedral' and his 'Family Reunion', and Valéry, together with some works of the Dutch and Flemish poets. He called himself a poetaster, a 'repeater', and he was to a high degree an eclectic, a follower—even a versifier: 343 pages of 'To Belinde', 404 pages of 'Sonnets to the Memory of a Deceased', that reminds one of Rückert! But he was ready to submit himself, to serve, and so became a true translator, for nearly sixty years at his self-chosen task, until his death, being at the end of his life nearly blind and unable to read.

I have tried to convey to you the idea that translation is necessary and can be done, even in poetry, fully agreeing with Anatole France who, to the remark that translation was an impossible task, answered "Precisely, my friend; the recognition of that truth is a necessary preliminary to success in the art."⁴³

I hope that I have been able to throw some light on the special question whether the translator of poetry should be a poet in his own right.

There will always remain untranslatable verses, stanzas, poems, and even whole poets — especially so when sound, rhythm, and meaning form a solid unity. But one should never say never, even in translation: In 1772 it was proved, by a Latin doctor's dissertation, that a German translation of Homer was utterly impossible, and twenty years later the 'German Homer' was born!⁴⁴

Translation often depends on the right time or the right person or both: Shakespeare could be translated only after

Klopstock, Goethe, and Schiller had moulded and hammered and chiselled the German language, *and* when *Schlegel* came to use this tool to perfection.

There will always be ingenious people to eradicate a white spot on the map of world literature (there are still many). We do have translations which we rightly call equally inspired; we even have standard translations which last for centuries—like the Vulgate, in use for nearly 1,600 years (Wulfila's Bible translation also served for five hundred years); like Coverdale's Psalms of 1535 which we still can enjoy; or Thomas à Kempis' 'Imitation of Christ' in the anonymous English translation of 1504!

Earlier I mentioned a few opponents of translation; well, translation seems to consist of paradoxes! Opponent Dante translated and paraphrased from the Bible, from classical and other authors; opponent von Humbolt translated over a long period of years Aeschylus' 'Agamemon'; opponent Grillparzer translated Spanish poetry; opponent Croce translated Goethe; Ortega y Gasset's essay is called "*Misería y esplendor de la traducción*" = 'Misery and Splendour of Translation.' And opponent Shelley made translations from Homer, Euripides, Calderón, Goethe (namely scenes from 'Faust': the 'Prologue in Heaven' and the 'Walpurgis Night'¹⁵) even though he described translation of a poem as a 'violet in the crucible'¹⁶

NOTES

1. See Novalis' rather one-sided letter, dated 30th November, 1797, to A. W. Schlegel: "Apart from the Romans, we are the only nation which has felt the urge to translate so irresistibly, and has to thank translation so enormously much for our education . . . The German character ('Deutschheit') is cosmopolitanism, mixed with the strongest individuality. Only for us have translations been expansions." (Novalis, *Werke und Briefe*, Leipzig, 1942, p. 635).
2. E. Cary, *La traduction dans le monde moderne*, Genève, 1956, p. 185. Here I must mention the little Reclam booklets which were started in 1867 as the first pocket-book library in the world, calling itself proudly 'Universal-Bibliothek', where even pupils and the poor could, for a ticky a time, collect 'world literature' (which, by the way, is a German word, coined by Goethe in 1827). Of the 'Library' which at its height comprised more than 8,000 items and literally the world literature of all times, 275 million copies had been printed before the devastating fires of the war years 1943/44. After the war Reclam started anew.
3. B. von Brentano, *August Wilhelm Schlegel*, Stuttgart, 1949, p. 67.
4. T. H. Savory, *The Art of Translation*, London, 1957, p. 101.
5. Quoted by Sir H. Grierson, *The Flute*, London, 1949, p. 4.
6. See also in T. F. Higham's excellent Introduction to *The Oxford book of Greek Verse in translation*, Oxford, 1953, p. xxxiii; "Translators, it is true, often miss their objective and destroy what they would save; but their achievement, taken as a whole, has been great. In this country, from the sixteenth century or before, the best of them have been conscious of a vocation."
7. R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic. Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford, 1963.
8. Op. cit. pp. 436, 439.
9. Maurice Baring, *Landmarks in Russian Literature*, University Paperbacks, Nr. 7, London, 1960, p. 196.
10. A nice example of a—rather simple—Haiku is the following: Asagao iu/tsurube torarete/morai-mizu. That means literally: By the bindweed/deprived of the well-bucket/presented water. The meaning is: During the night, a bindweed has climbed around the bucket of my well. It is so beautiful that I am unable to destroy it. I therefore forego the use of the bucket and fetch my water from a neighbour. (Manfred Hausmann, *Vollmondnächte. Japanische Gedichte*, Frankfurt/M.. 1951, p. 5).
11. To add a general remark: It is often forgotten that originally—in Greece and Israel, in the Egypt of the Pharaohs and in Africa or with the Red Indians—poetry was sung and danced.
12. Die Sonette an Orpheus, 1. Teil, V. Sonett (R. M. Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. I, Wiesbaden, 1955, p. 733).
13. J. Greshoff, "Over Vertalen," *Standpunte*, Jg. XI, Nr. 4, bl. 28.
- 13a. Chr. Morgenstern, *Das Mondschaf. Eine Auswahl aus den Galgenliedern/The Moon Sheep. Authorized English Version* by A. E. W. Eitzen, Wiesbaden, 1953, p. 75.

14. The first and second at Duino Castle in 1912 and the rest, together with the 'Sonnets to Orpheus,' in the 'hurricane' of February, 1922. Rilke's testimony seems to me so important that I am quoting in detail, and in the original text: "An Anton Kippenberg, am Abend (spät) des neunten Februar (1922). Mein lieber Freund, spät, und ob ich gleich kaum mehr die Feder halten kann, nach einigen Tagen ungeheuren Gehorsams im Geiste, es muss . . . , Ihnen **muss** es noch heute, jetzt noch, ehe ich zu schlafen versuche, gesagt sein: ich bin überm Berg! Endlich! Die 'Elegien' sind da . . . neun grosse, vom Umfang etwa der Ihnen schon bekannten. . . . Dass ein solcher Sturm aus Geist und Herz über einen kommen kann! Dass mans übersteht! dass mans übersteht. Genug, es ist da. Ich bin hinaus gegangen, in den kalten Mondschein und habe das kleine Muzot gestreichelt wie ein grosses Tier—, die alten Mauern, die mirs gewährt haben. Und das zerstörte Duino. (R. M. Rilke, **Briefe**, 2. Bd., 1914-1926, Wiesbaden, 1950, p. 308)—An Nanny Wunderly-Volkart, 10.2.1922, am Morgen: ". . . Ach dass ich dies noch erleben durfte,—was, erleben: **sein**, es sein, das Ungeheure. . . . Nicht einen Tag länger hätte ichs ausgehalten (wie in Duino damals,—ärger) . . . ich muss schon gut gefügt sein, dass ichs ausgehalten habe. (15.2). "Frida (die Hausbesorgerin) hat brav standgehalten in diesen Tagen, da Muzot auf hoher See des Geistes trieb. Nun war sie wirklich das . . . 'Geistlein'—kaum da und doch sorgend und ohne Angst, wenn ich hier oben ungeheure Kommandorufe aussties und Signale aus dem Weltraum empfang und sie dröhnend beantwortete mit meinen immensen Salut-Schüssen!" (op. cit., p. 573)—An Marie Fürstin von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, 11.2. abends: "Endlich, Fürstin, endlich, der gesegnete, **wie** gesegnete Tag, da ich Ihnen den Abschluss—soweit ich sehe—der Elegien anzeigen kann: zehn; Von der letzten, grossen . . . von dieser letzten . . . zittert mir noch die Hand! . . . Alles in ein paar Tagen, es war ein namenloser Sturm, ein Orkan im Geist (wie damals auf Duino), alles, was Faser in mir ist und Gewebe, hat gekracht,—an essen war nie zu denken, Gott weiss, wer mich genährt hat. Aber nun ists. Ist. Ist, Amen."—An Lou Andreas-Salomé, zur selben Zeit: "Dank! Ich hab überstehen dürfen bis dazu hin. Durch alles. Wunder. Gnade. . . . Deshalb schrieb ich Dir nicht auf Deinen Brief, weil ich immer schon in diesen Wochen, ohne zu wissen worauf, auf **dieses** zuschwieg, mit immer weiter nach innen genommenem Herzen." (R. M. Rilke, **Briefe aus Muzot**, 1921-26, Leipzig, 1937, pp. 114, 116)—An Dory von der Mühl, 23.6.: "Beide Arbeiten sind mir so, als ob es nicht meine wären (weil sie ohnehin, ihrer Natur nach, mehr sind als 'von mir'), nun eigentlich geschenkt worden—, die Fürstin staunte, und ich, wenn ich ganz wahr sein darf, ja, ich staunte mit, tout simplement, mit meinem reinsten innigsten Staunen." (op. cit., p. 156)—An Clara Rilke, 23.4.1923: "Ich selbst habe diese Gedichte (die, als sie unerwartet kamen . . . , mich so überstürzten, dass nur eben Zeit hatte, zu gehorchen) erst jetzt, im Vorlesen, nach und nach begreifen und genau weitergeben gelernt." (Op. cit. p., 208).
15. A very interesting case is Josef Weinheber, the great Austrian poet, who stresses both sides of the matter, first the inspiration: A poem, called 'Das reine Gedicht', starts with the two lines: "Du gabst im Schlafe, Gott, mir das Gedicht./Ich werde es

im Wachen nie begreifen". (J. Weinheber, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 2, Salzburg, 1954, p. 69). Or, in another, 'Das Kunstwerk': "Es ist mir erschienen./Es war ohne mich./ . . . Und plötzlich ertönt es,—Wann Gott es gefällt." (op. cit., p. 95). And, as a last example: 'Verdienst am Werk': "Du Element aus Licht und Finsternis,/das ich mich zu beschwören unterwinde:/Wieviel, wenn mich die Holde nicht verstieß,/ist **mein**, da ich das Wort am Ende finde?/Für ihre Schönheit sei ich nicht gekrönt!/Nicht für die Last, womit ich mich belade.—Was mit der Welt mich, sie mit mir versöhnt,/weist über uns hinaus, ist **sein**, ist Gnade." Or in his important letters to M. Sturm, dated 19.5. and 14.6.1941: "**Viels weiss ich ja selbst nicht zu erklären** Manche meiner Gedichte habe ich erst in späteren Jahren verstanden. . . . Ich selbst verstehe meine Gedichte nicht. Denn ich schreibe sie nicht mit **List**, ich **lasse**, sie durch, gebe ihnen nur mit, was mir zu Gebote steht an sprachlicher Erfahrung und Technik . . . Die Gedichtfolge 'An die Nacht' habe ich im Trancezustand geschrieben. (Bd. 5, 1956, pp. 544ff). Or in his 'Anmerkung zur Erscheinung Friedrich Hölderlins': "Die Dichter, als Trunkene, leben in einer Welt der Trunkenheit, die eine andere als die gegebene und für sie die eigentlich nüchterne ist. Das, was sie zu sagen haben, ist irrationaler Natur. Durch sie hindurch geht das Wesentliche, das Göttliche, und spricht sich durch ihren Mund aus. Wie sie das Unsagbare, das Wesentliche, in eine dem Sterblichen fassbare Form bringen, das ist ihre Sache." (Bd. 4, 1954, p. 56). And in his 'Traktat über das künstlerische Hervorbringen': "Gleichwohl habe ich in einem dreissigjährigen Schaffen die Erfahrung gemacht, dass die Kunst weder vom Können noch vom Wissen kommt. Beide Elemente sind dem Künstler wohl dienlich, primäre Elemente der künstlerischen Hervorbringung sind sie nicht." (op. cit., p. 217). And then, on the other hand, Weinheber stresses the **craft**, writes a whole poem without the letter e, another dedicated to the letter s, and does many experiments with all sorts of verses and stanzas. "Ich spreche da vom Handwerk, und ich tue das sehr bewusst. . . . Das Handwerk ist der Vater, so wie die Begabung die Mutter der schöpferischen Tat ist." (Bd. 4, p. 289). Letter to W. Vesper, 4.11.1935: "Ich . . . war ja immer mehr Sprachkünstler als Dichter. Ich suche einen neuen **handwerklichen Weg**" (Bd. 5, p. 180). Letter to Prof. H. Pongs, 8.2.1939: "Mich zog es immer mehr zu Experimenten rein formaler Nature." (op. cit., p. 425). And a final letter passage, concerning his last volume of poetry: 'Hier ist das Wort', to Maria Mahler, 21.8.1944: "Gleichzeitig schicke ich Ihnen das Manuskript meines neuen Buches. . . . Der ganze Vorwurf ist ja in dem Buch insofern neu, als noch kein Dichter Sich sein Handwerkszeug, oder besser, seinen Mutterstoff so ausgiebig zum Thema gemacht hat, wie es hier geschieht." (Op. cit., pp. 614f).

16. Uys Krige, *Vir die Luit en die Kitaar*, Johannesburg, 1950, p. 95. Cf. the following statement: "Evidence is abundant, from the times of the Romans onwards, that poets of different speech can be 'as definitely inspired' by each other's work 'as by any other causes that provoke verse'." (H. Wolfe, *Signpost to Poetry*, 1931, p. 209, quoted in *Oxford Book of Greek Verse*, p. xlvii).

17. F. Rosenzweig, **Sechzig Hymen und Gedichte des Jehuda Halevi Deutsch**, Konstanz, n.d., p. 107.
18. J. B. Leishman and S. Spender, **R. M. Rilke, Duinese Elegies. The German text with an English translation**, second edition, London, 1942; and especially his very informative and instructive article, written shortly before his death: 'Betrachtungen eines englischen Rilke-Übersetzers' (**Die Kunst der Übersetzung**, hg. von der Bayerischen Akademie, pp. 137-55).
19. Of E. FitzGerald's famous household word in English translation, the 'Rubáiyát,' "it is now generally admitted that it is in no sense even a free translation of his original. FitzGerald himself, in his letters, acknowledges that he took what liberties he liked with the Persian, and that his version was 'very unliteral' and 'very one-sided.'" (J. V. S. Wilkinson, in his Introduction to "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám," London, 1931, p. VI).
20. In W. Kayser's **Gedichte des französischen Symbolismus in deutschen Übersetzungen**, Tübingen, 1955, there are up to nine different translations of one French poem!
21. A. Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, **Essay on the principles of translation**, London, 1907, p. 111 (original edition, anonymous, in 1790!).
22. J. P. Postgate, **Translation and translations, theory and practice**, London, 1922, p. 77. This practice of translating poetry into prose is also followed by E. V. Rieu, the Editor of the Penguin Classics, and is taking place now in some instances even in Germany.
23. Weimarer Beiträge. **Zeitschrift für deutsche Literaturgeschichte**, Jg. VI (1960), Sonderheft, p. 1269.
24. **German Life and letters**, Vol. 16 (1963), pp. 164ff.—I cannot resist quoting Valéry Larbaud's, the French noted translator's definition of a translator: "Le traducteur est méconnu; il est assis à la dernière place; il ne vit pour ainsi dire que d'aumônes; il accepte de remplir les plus infimes fonctions, les rôles les plus effacés; 'Servir' est sa devise, et il ne demande rien pour lui-même, mettant toute sa gloire à être fidèle aux maîtres qu'il s'est choisis, fidèle jusqu'à l'anéantissement de sa propre personnalité intellectuelle. L'ignorer, lui refuser toute considération, ne le nommer, la plupart du temps, que pour l'accuser, bien souvent sans preuves, d'avoir trahi celui qu'il a voulu interpréter, le dédaigner même lorsque son ouvrage nous satisfait, c'est mépriser les qualités les plus précieuses et les vertus les plus rares: l'abnégation, la patience, la charité même, et l'honnêteté scrupuleuse, l'intelligence, la finesse, les connaissances étendues, une mémoire riche et prompte,—vertus et qualités dont quelques-unes peuvent manquer chez les meilleurs esprits, mais qui ne se trouvent jamais réunies dans la médiocrité." (V. L., *Sous l'invocation de Saint Jérôme*, Paris, 1946, p. 9).
25. Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung Darmstadt, Jahrbuch, 1960, pp. 33ff.
26. Nabokov gives us a good example so far as Pushkin is concerned. He says: ". . . In order to translate Pushkin one needs detached knowledge of: Krilow's Fables, Byron's works, French poets of the 18th century, Rousseau's 'La Nouvelle Héloïse', Pushkin's biography, banking games, Russian songs related to divination, Russian military ranks, the rules of the pistol duel—

- the Russian language." (V. Nabokov, "Problems of Translation: 'Onegin' in English", *Partisan Review*, Vol. 22, 1955 (p 496-512).
27. There are notable exceptions to the one poet or one language—one translator rule. I should like to mention one here: K. Th. Busch, an engineer, took on himself a colossal, self-denying task: He presented us with more than 700 sonnets by 400 poets of nearly all the languages and dialects in which sonnets were written (i.e. 26), covering seven centuries, from Frederick of Sicily down to the present time. Such a representative panorama of one lyrical form, together with a mine of information, does not exist in any other language. The translations are without fault, and yet—the whole book is sung in unisono. The poems he translated are all sonnets, that is agreed; but even in the realm of the sonnet, there are differences in time, in space, in temperament which do not sufficiently come out. (K.Th.B., *Sonette der Völker*, Heidelberg, 1954).
 28. In the letter already quoted in Note 1, p. 636 (George, H. v. Heiseler, v. Hofmannsthal, Schröder, Vossler, and Borchardt) they all claim translation as creative work!
 29. As Helen Waddell, the great and devoted translator from Chinese and Medieval Latin, but no poetess, puts it so charmingly: ". . . born with this kind of restlessness, this curiosity to transmute the beauty of the one language into another, although this baser alchemy is apt to turn the gold to copper and at worst to lead." (H.W., *Medieval Latin Lyrics*, Harmondsworth, 1952).
 30. **An anthology of world poetry**, edited by Mark van Doren, New York, 1928, p. vii.
 31. Baudelaire translated and introduced Poe to Europe, and his contemporaries looked upon him as Poe's translator.—D. G. Rossetti would be great even if he had only translated the precursors and friends of Dante.—Marie Under, the Estonian poetess, has a big and excellent translation work from several languages to her credit.—Pasternak turned to translation when he had been silenced by the censors in his original work (Goethe's 'Faust', Kleist, Rilke, Shakespeare, etc.). C. M. Bowra hails him as one of the greatest translators who ever lived. And though he is still highly praised as a poet, I have a strong feeling, from the translations and critics I have read, that he will last as a translator and not as a poet. A peculiar case is Ezra Pound whose original work is totally intermingled with translations from Chinese, Provencal, Italian, Latin and French lyric.
 32. K. Vossler, **Leopardi**, Heidelberg, 1930, p. 91.
 33. Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung Darmstadt, **Jahrbuch**, 1961, p. 48.
 34. K. Wais, **An den Grenzen der Nationalliteraturen**, Berlin, 1958, p. 328.
 35. **Shakespeare Sonette englisch und deutsch in der Übertragung von Gottlob Regis**, Hamburg, 1958.
 36. **The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature**, Cambridge, 1953, p. 726.
 37. Dante, **The Divine Comedy**, Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, 1950, 1953, 1962.

38. Luther is such a good case in point that I should like to state a few facts at least in these notes: There is no doubt that Luther is one of the greatest translators of all times. This applies especially to the New Testament which he did single-handed, with extremely little help, in less than three months; but also to the Old Testament which was the result of a teamwork but which clearly shows his master-hand. We here have a unique unity of sense, sound and rhythm. But Luther is a mediocre poet—which will sound somewhat blasphemous, though I do not go as far as some critics who declare he is no poet at all. Did he not write his famous hymns? Yes, he did, but if we look closely we find the following: Of his 37 hymns, 12 are re-written from older German ones, 8 from Latin ones, 8 are psalm adaptations, only 9 are his own, and even these use other material! It therefore seems to me significant that Friedhelm Kemp included, in his anthology of religious poetry, more of Luther's Bible versions than of his poems. (*Deutsche geistliche Dichtung aus tausend Jahren*. Hg. von F.K., München, 1958).
39. Brentano, A. W. Schlegel, p. 215.
40. Op cit., p. 21.
41. H. Prang, F. Rückert. *Geist und Form der Sprache*, Wiesbaden, 1963, p. 109.
42. Letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, dated 29.12.1921, *Gesammelte Briefe*, Bd. 5, p. 83.
43. *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1921, p. 117.
44. Johann Heinrich Voss's translation of the 'Odyssey' in 1781 and of the 'Iliad' in 1793. A. W. Schlegel: "Man muss nur nie daran verzweifeln, dass etwas bisher noch Unerreichtes geschehen könne, um das scheinbar Unmögliche zustande zu bringen." (Brentano, Schlegel, p. 26).
45. The latter published in Vol. 1 (1822) of 'The Liberal', the former in his posthumous poems. It is remarkable that Shelley first gave a literal, interlinear translation of the "Prologue in Heaven", accompanied by the following note: "Such is a literal translation of this astonishing chorus; it is impossible to represent in another language the melody of the versification; even the volatile strength and delicacy of the ideas escape in the crucible of translation, and the reader is surprised to find a *caput mortuum*." This is followed by a (not bad) poetical translation. It is a pity Shelley did not translate more, because the translation of 'Faust' into English is a rather sad chapter.
46. We find this motto of the lecture in the following significant context: "Sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent. . . . Hence the language of poets has ever affected a sort of uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence than the words themselves without reference to that peculiar order. Hence the **vanity of translations**; it were as wise to cast a **violet into a crucible** that you might discover the formal principles of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creation of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower—and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel." (P. B. Shelley, *A defense of poetry*, edited by A. S. Cook, New York, n.d., p. 8).