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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Warren Hastings as a Translator of Latin Poetry

Stuart Gillespie

Warren Hastings (1732-1818) has some well-known literary connections. He corresponded with Scott, and collected Southey. Jane Austen, the daughter of two of his old friends, expressed herself ‘quite delighted’ with his praise for *Pride and Prejudice*.¹ There are Cowper’s lines to his old schoolfellow (‘Hastings! I knew thee young’), welcoming, in 1792, the first signs that the result of Hastings’ record-length trial for corruption during his time as *de facto* Governor-General of India, a proceeding which had begun in 1788, would be his vindication. In his own time, Hastings must have been known as something of a poet himself, if only within his own circle, because small collections of his verse are found in manuscripts still extant today. The Reverend Thomas Leigh, for example, a friend who lived at Addlestrop, had a number of letters he had received from Hastings bound up with his copies of some twenty pages’-worth of Hastings’ verse, and labelled it, on the spine, ‘Poems of Warren Hastings’.² But none of this verse was ever printed, and Hastings himself tended to be dismissive of his poetical efforts, though the editor of his letters confirms that ‘his ... impromptus were eagerly handed about and preserved’.³

Hastings was right not to over-estimate the merits of his occasional original poems, writings which as far as can be ascertained were by no means extensive. They are miscellaneous, short in length, sometimes extempore, and often conventional enough, even if his lifelong interest in poetry, including the contemporary, tends to ensure a certain level of competence. But Hastings was also an occasional translator, and his translations and imitations of Latin poets, for the most part preserved only in fair copies in the numerous

volumes of his diaries in the British Library, are a different matter. These are more than mere exercises; Hastings would have chosen his source-texts for his own reasons, and a personal stake in these compositions makes them vehicles for personal expression.

My interest in Hastings' versions of Latin texts was first aroused by a short imitation of Lucan. Here, avoiding what is easily the most famous line in the *Pharsalia*,⁴ he takes instead the passage which immediately follows (1.129-57). In this unprinted and unknown piece of work, Hastings adapts and tellingly applies to the contemporary world Lucan's comparison of the two rivals in the Roman civil wars, Pompey and Caesar – the first described by Lucan as (in the Loeb Classical Library's English rendering) 'the mere shadow of a mighty name' who is now 'swayed entirely by the breath of popularity', but the second as 'alert and headstrong'.⁵ In Hastings' bitterly sardonic application of Lucan's lines, Pompey becomes Great Britain, a nation in terminal decline through complacency and 'foul corruption'. There can be no doubt of Hastings' intention: in an extra couplet given as a footnote, he provides as an alternative for his already sardonic lines 11-12 (see the text below) an even more contemptuous allusion to the national complacency and self-regard of his age:

Pleas'd ev'n to hear the throng'd orchestra ring

With "Rule Britannia" or "God save the King".

The identity of the rival nation implicitly identified with the civil wars' eventual victor, Julius Caesar, is less transparent today, but many of the features mentioned seem to fit the United States of America by the time of the Anglo-American War of 1812-15.⁶ The imitation is presented under the heading 'A fragment, from Lucan's Pharsalia'. I give the bulk of it here.⁷

Nor were the nations equal in the strife:

One verging to the close of active life,

While foul corruption, like th' intestine worm,
 Fed on her strength, and bow'd her wasted form;
 Her plans by patriot zeal, or faction, crost,
 Her arms victorious, but their object lost;
 Unlearn'd by long misuse, her better state
 Seem'd rich by debt, and by extension great.

Still fond of popular renown, and proud
 To catch the plaudits of the venal crowd; 10

Pleas'd ev'n to hear her own Orchestra sing
 Her naval prowess, and her godlike King,
 She sought not with fresh pow'rs her scanty store
 To strengthen, or enlarge, but trusting more
 To former fortune, and established fame,
 She stood, the shadow of a mighty name.

Such, on the fertile globe, an oak uprears
 Its ample form, deck'd with the spoils of years,
 And votive gifts, yet holds, with root unsound,
 By weight alone its fixture with the ground; 20

Its branches wide in naked waste display'd,
 Not with its leaves, but trunk, it forms a shade,
 And nodding to its fall, it seems to wait
 From the first Eastern blast its ready fate.

Though many a wood with solid timber stand,
 This only claims the worship of the land.⁸

Her rival's name in less repute was known,

But virtue, that in restless action shone,
 Was hers: impatience of restraint to place;
 And only not to conquer was disgrace: 30
 Fierce, uncontroll'd, if hope, if anger sway'd
 Her will, her ready hand the call obey'd,
 And never spar'd the violated blade.
 Insatiate of success, her ardent breast
 Still on her deity's indulgence press'd,
 Impell'd whate'er oppos'd her sov'reign sway;
 Pleas'd ev'n by ruin to have wrought her way.⁹

Others may have other ideas about the identity of the ‘rival power’, but two points may be made regardless: this is a striking piece of evidence about how Hastings came to see his country, and an impressive specimen of couplet verse.

Hastings was a pupil of Westminster School, the alma mater of English poets from Jonson and Herbert, through Cowley, Dryden, and Prior, to Southey and Churchill. In the mid-eighteenth century it still provided a most rigorous classical education, and his years there gave Hastings a relish for Classical Studies which was to last for the rest of his life. He also acquired, according to a recent account, ‘the habit which he never lost of composing verses, either in Latin or more frequently in English imitations of Latin metres’.¹⁰ On Hastings as a translator and imitator of ancient Latin poetry his biographers seem to be silent, but these activities are only one step away.

A second version of Lucan in another manuscript is of a different character, tackling a widely admired passage without radical adaptation, but it is once again executed with very considerable skill. This seems to date from the 1790s: it was written out, again in Hastings’

own hand, on the final leaf of his diary for the years 1794-9 (the final entry in the volume is dated 31 May 1799). It is a translation of Cato's speech to his troops at *Pharsalia* 9.379-401:

O ye, to whom my tents no wish supply
 For safety, but with necks unbow'd to die,
 To the great work of virtue now prepare
 Your minds, and labors in extreme to bear.
 To barren fields, the wrecks of fire, we go,
 Where suns oppress, and fountains rarely flow,
 Where deadly serpents taint the blasted soil;
 Scenes, such as suit the patriot's hardy toil.
 They who to aid their sinking Country fly,
 Must Lybia's wastes, and tracts impervious try; 10
 Go where she calls, nor form a wish to know
 What issue waits them, but resolve to go.
 For 'tis not mine my soldiers to betray,
 Or hide the terrors which obstruct their way,
 Nor seek I comrades whom no¹¹ dangers fright,
 But whom those dangers of themselves invite.
 But he who honor'd with a soldier's name,
 Can ev'n in thought a pledge of safety claim,
 Who clings to life, enamor'd of its load,
 May seek a master by a better road. 20
 While first my feet the dang'rous sands engage,
 Me may th' ethereal fire, the serpent's rage,

Assail; to all be my example shown,
 And by my fate be all your dangers known.
 Let him who sees me drink, of thirst complain;
 Of heat, if I desire the shade to gain;
 Or faint, if I a lazy horseman lead
 My suff'ring troops, while they on foot proceed:

Comparison with other English verse translations of the passage confirms that this is once again much more than merely competent. The overblown rhetoric Nicholas Rowe gives Cato at this point in his still admired English *Pharsalia* of 1718, for example, is by no means obviously preferable to Hastings' restraint:

My Feet shall foremost print the dusty Soil:
 Strike me the first, thou flaming God of Day,
 First let me feel thy fierce, thy scorching Ray;
 Ye living Poisons all, ye snaky Train,
 Meet me the first upon the fatal Plain.¹²

Hastings is considerably closer to the Latin too: his ‘ethereal fire’, for instance, is a simple and literal version of Lucan’s ‘calor aetherius’ (9.396) which Rowe turns into a ‘scorching ray’ sent by Apollo (unmentioned by Lucan), the ‘flaming god of day’.

Next I turn to three translations of Horatian odes which form a sequence of sorts, written when the most momentous events of Hastings’ life were about to unfold. Two appear in the same diary volume, for the years 1784-5. The first-dated was evidently one of those compositions of Hastings’ which circulated in his own time, because it is extant in at least

one contemporary manuscript copy unconnected with Hastings personally. In another copy it is headed ‘An Ode written by Warren Hastings Esqre. On Board the Barrington in his Voyage from Bengal to England in the Year 1785.’¹³ It was, then, composed during Hastings’ voyage home after a sixteen-year absence, the Barrington having set out from Bengal on 6 February and landing at Plymouth on 14 June of that year. At this point Hastings had reasonable expectations of honour and thanks for his service in India, there being no warning signs of the machinations that were to dog him for most of the coming decade. The elegance of this translation of Ode 2.16 makes it easy enough to see why readers made further copies, but again Hastings has introduced some strongly personal elements. In the antepenultimate and preceding stanzas he substitutes for and elaborates on Horace’s examples of unhappy old age and early death respectively. First he replaces Tithonus with Clive of India, his great predecessor as Governor of Bengal. Clive of India died in 1774 after a frustrating political career in England, perhaps by his own hand, during Hastings’ tenure of the same post. Hastings then refers to his young friend Alexander Elliot in place of Horace’s Achilles. Elliot was a younger brother of Gilbert Elliot, the Lord Minto of Anglo-Indian history, and died well before his time on a dangerous expeditionary mission to Nagpur at Hastings’ behest in 1778, whereupon Hastings erected a monument to his private secretary and friend. These references, of course, turn Horace’s lines directly towards Hastings’ own life, as in a different way does the dedication to John Shore, one of Hastings’ most capable civil officers during his time in India.

To J. Shore Esq.

Horace. 2^d Book. 16th Ode. 28 March

For Ease the harrass’d Seaman prays,

When Equinoctal Tempests raise
 The Cape's surrounding Wave;
 When hanging o'er the Reef he hears
 The cracking Mast, and sees, or fears,
 Beneath, his wat'ry Grave.

For Ease the slow Maratta spoils;
 And hardier Sic erratic toils;¹⁴
 And both their Ease forego:
 For Ease, which neither Gold can buy; 10
 Nor Robes, nor Gems, which oft belie
 The cover'd Heart, bestow.

For neither Wealth, nor Titles join'd,
 Can heal the foul, or suffering Mind.
 Lo! where their Owner lies!
 Perch'd on his Couch Distemper breathes,
 And Care like Smoke, in turbid Wreathes
 Round the gay Ceiling flies.

He who enjoys, nor covets more,
 The Lands his Father own'd before, 20
 Is of true Bliss possess'd;
 Let but his Mind unfetter'd tread
 Far as the Paths of Knowledge lead;

And wise, as well as blest.

No Fears his Peace of Mind annoy,
 Lest printed Lies his Fame destroy,
 Which labor'd years have won:
 Nor pack'd Committees break his Rest;
 Nor Av'rice sends him forth, in Quest
 Of Climes beneath the Sun.

30

Short is our Span: Then why engage
 In Schemes for which Man's transient Age
 Was ne'er by Fate design'd?
 Why slight the Gifts of Nature's Hand?
 What Wand'rer from his native Land
 E'er left himself behind?

The restless Thought, and wayward Will,
 And Discontent attend him still,
 Nor quit him while he lives.

At Sea care follows in the Wind: 40
 At Land it mounts the Pad¹⁵ behind,
 Or with the Postboy drives.

He who would happy live to day,
 Should laugh the present Ills away,

Nor think of Woes to come:
 For come They will, or soon or late,
 Since mix'd at best is Man's Estate,
 By Heavn's eternal Doom.

To ripen'd Age Clive liv'd renown'd,
 With Lace enrich'd, with Honors crown'd, 50
 His Valor's well-earn'd Meed.
 Too long, alas! he liv'd, to hate
 His envied Lot, and died too late
 From life's Oppression freed.

An early Death was Elliot's Doom.
 I saw his op'ning Virtues bloom,
 And manly Sense unfold:
 Too soon to fade! – I bad the Stone
 Record his Name mid Hordes unknown,
 Unknowing what it told. 60

To Thee perhaps the Fates may give
 (I wish they may) in Wealth to live;
 Flocks, Herds, and fruitful Fields;
 Thy vacant Hours in Mirth to shine.
 With these the Muse, already thine,
 Her present Bounties yields.

For me, O Shore, I only claim
 To merit, not to seek for Fame;
 The Good and Just to please;
 A State above the Fear of Want; 70
 Domestic Love, Heav'n's choicest Grant;
 Health, Leisure, Peace and Ease.

A few days later, on the following page of his diary, Hastings copied down his version of Ode 2.10, dating it 31 March (1785). Its is addressed 'To D. Anderson Esq.'. David Anderson (1750-1828), an Edinburgh man who was a close friend of Hastings', travelled with him on the Barrington, and they continued to exchange letters for many years afterwards. But in this case, if there is any special personal application it is not apparent, apart from the possibility that the choice of source text might perhaps have been suggested by the sea voyage.

Horace's 2^d Book 10. Ode. 31st March.

To D. Anderson Esq.

Friend David, let this Maxim be
 Your Guide through Life's unsteady Sea:
 Your Course prescrib'd to mind:
 If fair, prepar'd against a Gale;
 If foul, to yield a Point, nor sail
 Too close upon the Wind.

Whoever loves the golden Mean,
Shall blush not for his Cot unclean;
Nor dirtier Shifts of Want:
Nor deal for Show the rich Repast,
Nor barter solid Joyes for taste;
Nor envied Palace vaunt.

The lordly Pines uprooted lie
By Storms, which Shrubs unhurt defy;
And bow their Honors low:
The Spires for heavier Ruin rear
Their Heav'ns Piles; and light'nings sear
The Mountain's lofty brow.

When Things go well, the guarded Breast
Will doubt, not fear, the worst; the best,
Or better hope, if ill:
The Pow'r that swells the Storm, allays:
Apollo sometimes wears the Bays,
Not always arm'd to kill.

When Fortune frowns, collected stand,
And rule your Helm with steady Hand,
Unruffled though she teaze:

Nor trust her, though the Weather mend,
 But trim your Sails, your Halyards tend:
 Then bend before the Breeze.

Hastings' third and chronologically last translation from Horace's *Odes* is of a quite different complexion from this second example, and it is tempting to imagine this is connected with his changing personal situation. In the Spring of 1786 Burke produced charges for Hastings' impeachment to be voted by the House of Commons and then to be heard by the House of Lords. On 1-2 May 1786 Hastings delivered a hastily compiled defence. A year later, on 10 May 1787, he was formally impeached. This third Horatian composition is a translation of Ode 1.2 on Rome's civil wars which appears in Hastings' diary immediately following an entry dated 5 October 1786 and preceding the next for November 1786. It is obvious that a translation dating from the Autumn of 1786 might reflect the stormclouds gathering around Hastings. I do not wish to claim that immediate parallels with the contemporary world are intended, even if the 1780s is a period of insurrection, riot, and revolution in more than one part of Europe, but it may at least be said that Hastings must have had a free choice of what (if anything) to take as his text for translation, and that the far darker mood of this Horatian ode is in keeping with the turn his life was now taking.

Too long the frighted Lands bewail
 The driving Snow, and wasting Hail;
 And the struck Tow'rs, though sacred, prove
 The red right hand of angry Jove.

The frightened Nations see appear

The dire portents of Pyrrha's Fear
When Proteus to the mountains led
His Flock, and on their Summits fed.

And Elms the haunt of fishes stood,
Where late the bird of Venus coo'd; 10
And Floods the Deer uplifted bore
High o'er the Plains they graz'd before.

Such was the Scene when Tiber bore,
Retorted from the Etruscan Shore,
His yellow Flood, and vow'd the Doom
Of Vesta's Fanes, and Numa's Tomb;

While with profess'd revenge he flies,
Uxorious Stream, for Ilia's Cries,
And his left bank o'erpass'd (nor heeds
The frown of Jove forbidding) speeds. 20

Our Sons shall hear of Deeds of war,
Their parents bane, that better far
Had thinn'd the Hosts of Persia's throne,
With Vengeance pointed at their own.

What God shall Rome in Rome's decline

Invoke? What pray'rs at Vesta's Shrine,
 By the chaste Virgins hourly sent,
 Fatigue the Goddess to relent?
 To whose propitiatory hand
 Shall Jove consign the guilty land?

30

Apollo, come! O come confest,
 With Clouds thy radiant shoulders drest,
 Whose hand directs the solar blaze,
 Whose mind the depths of Fate surveys.

Or laughing Venus, on whose state
 Light wing'd desire and frolic wait!
 Or rather Thou, if yet thy race,
 And long neglected Kind, have place

In thy regard, whom Shouts of war,
 The polish'd Shield, and rattling Car,
 And the fierce-visag'd Moor delight,
 Who meets on foot the bloody fight!

40

But if by our Entreaties won,
 Thou, God of Speed, bright Maia's Son,
 Art come, with alter'd form and mien,
 A mortal Youth in Semblance seen,

Content to be th' avenger sung
 Of Rome's distress, and Cesar's wrong;

O late to Heav'n be thy return!
 Nor by a flight too rapid borne, 50
 Unjust to our Offences, leave
 The State unheal'd thy Loss to grieve.

Here love to triumph, here command,
 The Prince and father of thy Land;
 Nor let the Medes unpunish'd ride,
 While Thou, Thou Cesar, art our guide.

It is noteworthy that no English version of Ode 1.2 was found good enough to be included in the Penguin anthology of historical translations *Horace in English*.¹⁶ I wonder whether this one might have passed muster with the editors, had they known of it. One can see why they would have rejected, for example, Sir Richard Fanshawe's attempt of 1652, which is beset by mistranslations and awkwardness:

Our Children through our faults but few,
 Shall hear that We their Fathers slew
 Our Countrymen: who might as well
 The Persians quell.¹⁷

The sense of the Latin, captured by Hastings, is not, of course, ‘who might as well’, but ‘who might far better’. The forced rhymes and syntactic contortions of Fanshawe’s next stanza signal the difficulty of approximating to Horace’s Sapphics in English:

What God shall we invoke to stay
 The falling Empire? with what Lay
 Shall holy Nuns tire Vesta’s Pray’r-
 Resisting Ear?

It is not possible here to survey further English attempts on this ode, but enough has already been said to suggest that success has not been common.

Three other translations by Hastings, from two other Latin poets, are known to me.¹⁸ They will be included in my forthcoming edition of unprinted historical English translations (n. 9), and are not presented here. As can be seen from the list in the Appendix, they consist of one epigram from Martial and versions of two of Catullus’ *Carmina*. I hope it is not too tantalizing to conclude this first account by saying that these versions of Catullus C.8 and C.11, both of them poems of betrayed love, are, in my judgement, Hastings’ most successful translations of all.

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APPENDIX

Translations by Warren Hastings extant in British Library Manuscripts

We know that Hastings' original verse compositions were copied and preserved among his friends, yet almost all the translations I have located are found either in his diaries or in other autograph collections in the British Library. An author search of the catalogues of the repositories covered by the Folger-hosted Union First-Line Index of English Verse <www.firstlines.folger.edu> produces only one exception: a copy of Hastings' version of Horace's Ode 2.16 in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It is possible that further translations by Hastings are extant in manuscripts which have not been covered in this survey; I should be glad to be notified of any such items. For the text of another manuscript work which is not quite a translation - an affectionate parody of Pope's *Odyssey* - see my forthcoming *Newly Recovered English Classical Translations* (n. 9).

Catullus, *Carm.* 8: 'No more Catullus idly pine', Add. MS 39881, fol. 54^{r-v}

Catullus, *Carm.* 11: 'Aurelius, Furius, friends, and sworn', Add. MS 39881, fols 54^v-55^r

Horace, *Ode* 1.2: 'Too long the frightened lands bewail', Add. MS 39880, fols 40^r-41^r

Horace, *Ode* 2.10: 'Friend David let this maxim be', Add. MS 39879, fol. 72^{r-v} (further copy in Add. MS 45418)

Horace, *Ode* 2.16: 'For ease the harassed seaman prays', Add. MS 39879, fols 70^v-71^r
(further copies in Add. MSS 29235 and 39901; Egerton MS 3700)

Lucan, *Pharsalia* 9.379-401: 'O ye to whom my tents no wish supply', Add. MS 39883, fol.

Lucan, *Pharsalia* 1.129-57: ‘Nor were the nations equal in the strife’, Add. MS 29325, fols

86^r-87^r

Martial, Epigram 3.48: ‘Sir John in pity built an humble shed’, Add. MS 39882, fol. 173

¹ Austen to her sister Cassandra, 15 September 1813. Hastings had written to her in praise of her novel.

² See the description of this item as recently offered for sale by John Wilson Manuscripts Ltd at <<http://www.manuscripts.co.uk/stock/5626.htm>> (accessed 22 November 2016).

³ *The Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*, edited by Sydney C. Grier (Edinburgh, 1905), p. 15. For the dismissiveness see p. 273, where Hastings describes his versification of a tale from the *Mharabarata* (from Charles Wilkins’ English version) as worthless apart from the fact that his wife inspired it.

⁴ ‘Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa tuetur’, 1.128.

⁵ *Lucan: With an English Translation by J. D. Duff* (Cambridge, MA, 1928), p. 13.

⁶ The sole manuscript known to me in which this translation appears, BL MS Add. 29235, is not helpful in providing context or date. The text appears on one of a large number of loose sheets bound together, consisting of (1) poetical pieces both original and translated, many in Hastings’ hand, dating from in or before the 1780s to the 1810s; (2) poetical tributes to Hastings, mostly in the wake of the famous 1795 court verdict.

⁷ Full references to all manuscripts referred to or quoted are included in the Appendix which appears below. My transcriptions absorb authorial corrections silently, but are otherwise diplomatic versions of Hastings’ fair copies except where noted, with line numbering added.

⁸ In this passage my transcription transposes the first word of lines 23 and 25. This correction is speculative but the lines make little sense otherwise; Hastings’ attention may have wandered as he copied out his work.

⁹ The rest of the composition can be found in the complete text provided in my forthcoming edition of *Newly Recovered English Classical Translations, 1600-1800* (Oxford University Press).

¹⁰ P. J. Marshall, ‘Warren Hastings as Scholar and Patron’, in *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History presented to Dame Lucy Sutherland*, edited by Anne Whiteman *et al.*, pp. 242-62 (Oxford, 1973), p. 243.

¹¹ The ms reads ‘not’, but the ‘t’ is a later (and obviously inappropriate) insertion, perhaps in another hand.

¹² Nicholas Rowe, *Lucan’s Pharsalia. Translated into English Verse* (London, 1718), p. 374 (lines 669-73).

¹³ BL Add. MS 39901, fol. 3^r.

¹⁴ ‘Sic’ = ‘Sikh’. In the previous line, the Marathas are an Indian people ‘famed in history as yeoman warriors and champions of Hinduism’ (*Encyclopedia Britannica*); Hastings was involved in the Anglo-Maratha War of 1775-82, the first of three Anglo-Maratha wars fought between the British East India Company and the Maratha Empire.

¹⁵ A word for ‘road’ (*OED* 1).

¹⁶ *Horace in English*, edited by D. S. Carne-Ross and Kenneth Haynes (Harmondsworth, 1996).

¹⁷ Fanshawe is quoted from *The Poems and Translations of Sir Richard Fanshawe*, edited by Peter Davidson, 2 vols (Oxford, 1997), I, 152.

¹⁸ A further composition found in more than one ms copy, ‘The History of Rooroo and Promod-Bora translated from the 8th and 9th Chapters of the first Book of Mahabaurat’ (as it is headed in BL MS Add. 39891), is a versification of part of a previous English prose translation: see n. 3, above.