

Compte rendu du "Rural Philosopher" (The Monthly Review)

Présentation du texte

La [Monthly Review](#), qui avait déjà proposé en 1800 une [analyse](#) du texte original, rend compte assez favorablement de la [traduction anglaise](#) de *L'Homme des champs* dans sa livraison de novembre 1801¹.

Citations

Le critique anonyme commence en rappelant les difficultés que pose en général toute traduction poétique, puis il souligne le défi particulier que pose le **traitement des passages où Delille a lui-même imité des auteurs anglais** :

The difficulty of translating poetry has always been acknowledged ; yet this concession has not rendered criticism less rigid. Mediocrity in an original writer is not more insupportable than in a translator ; and a feeble copy of a fine picture, or of a beautiful poem, is equally condemned. Nearly all our best translators and imitators have been great originals : as, for instances, Dryden, Pope, and Rowe. When passages occur which the different idiom of the two languages makes it impossible to render closely, or even intelligibly, native genius is required to supply equivalents ; and, seizing the *spirit* of the passage, we should throw aside the *words*, and express the *idea* as a thought of our own.

As many parts of the production before us have been either copied or imitated from our own poets, it is, difficult to transfuse them again into English, to the satisfaction of those who have often contemplated them in their pristine state ; and however well a translator may have performed his task, the same allowance should be made for evaporation, as in pouring liquors out of one vessel into another. Indulgence in such cases is claimed by Mr. Maunde, and, we think, with reason².

En effet, après avoir déploré quelques gallicismes, le critique formule un avis général qui salue une **métrique fluide** et **peu d'inexactitudes** de sens :

[...] we must inform our readers that the numbers are, in general, flowing; that the poet's thoughts are not often inaccurately rendered; and that, though the elegance of expression cannot be expected to equal that of a bard so renowned for harmony of composition, yet this version will convey to the English reader many of his beauties, and a satisfactory general idea of the whole work³.

Cet enthousiasme tempéré fléchit quelque peu lors de l'examen du chant 3, dont le contenu aurait exigé le concours d'un **Lucretèce**; mais le critique n'en conseille pas moins la lecture aux "jeunes naturalistes" :

Canto III. begins thus in the original :

*"Que j'aime le mortel, noble dans ses penchants,
Qui cultive à la fois son esprit et ses champs !"*

This couplet is not happily rendered by Mr. Maunde :

*"I love the man, that, noble in his views,
The culture of his land and soul pursues."*

To cultivate the *soul* is not an usual expression; but it appears that the translator was driven to this extremity by the word *mind* (*esprit*) being wanted, as a rhyme, in the next line. [...] The physiology of this III^d Canto was difficult to write, and is still more difficult to translate. The Deluge and its effects demanded a Lucretius to delineate them. The course of rivers, hurricanes, volcanoes, subterraneous cities, sea wonders and productions, and the whole range of natural history, are displayed in the poetry and the notes of this book; which will be found both amusing and instructive by young naturalists⁴.

Vers concernés : [chant 3, vers 1-2](#).

La conclusion est donc **mitigée** : "On the whole, though this translation is unequal, and far from perfect, the parts which are happily executed convince us that, with less hurry and more correction, Mr. Maunde might have done greater justice to the author and to himself. As a first undertaking, it by no means calls for discouragement⁵".

Liens externes

- Accès à la numérisation du texte : [GoogleBooks](#).

Auteur de la page — [Hugues Marchal](#) 2017/05/01 17:21

¹ "ART. II. *The Rural Philosopher; or, French Georgics. A Didactic Poem. Translated from the Original of the Abbé Delille; intitled L'Homme des Champs. By John Maunde.* Crown 8vo. 6s. Boards. Kearsley. 1801.", *The Monthly Review*, vol.\ 37, novembre 1801, p.\ 236-241.

² *Id.*, p.\ 236.

³ *Id.*, p.\ 237.

⁴ *Id.*, p.\ 239-240.

⁵ *Id.*, p.\ 241.

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