
The name of this new prose translation is a little misleading. For, though this is the *Aeneid*, it is not Vergil. The title suggests everything that one might associate with Vergil's great epic, yet the opening line of the translation bodes ill: 'This is a story of a war - and the story of a warrior'. Gone is Vergil's *virum*, replaced by Cobbold's warrior - an interpretive gloss that is misplaced. There is war in the *Aeneid*, but not as much as Cobbold's opening suggests, and to designate Aeneas as a warrior denies the humanity with which Vergil imbues him and the entire poem. This continues right through to Turnus' death in the very last lines, which, in this version, left me with none of the pathos and ambivalence of the original.

Cobbold abdicates the task of replicating Vergil's style and music and, as a result, the reader loses Vergil's trademark ambivalence and ambiguity. He attempts to capture what Vergil *means* rather than what he *literally says*. I wonder, however, how appropriate such an approach is, given that so much of Vergil's meaning is inextricably bound up in *how* he presents it. An example, given by Cobbold himself in his 'Notes on the Translation' is the famous 'sunt lacrimae rerum' (*Aeneid* 1.462) which Cobbold renders as 'We live in a sad world.' This may very well be what Vergil *means*, but it is terribly prosaic and captures very little of the emotion behind the statement. It also ignores the immediately preceding line:

> en Priamus. sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi,
> sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt. (*Aeneid* 1.461-2)

Aeneas is gazing on images of Trojan suffering depicted in the Carthaginian temple of Juno and his eyes rest on Priam, which prompts his outburst to Achates. Cobbold has missed that 'hic etiam' goes with both line 461 and 462, and so his rendering overplays
the generalising undertone, without due acknowledgement of the contextualised overtone.

In his ‘Notes’, Cobbold outlines his practice that ‘the longer and more complicated [similes] have been separated off by indentation’. Ostensibly, Cobbold does this because the similes might become a distraction to the reader who is not ready for them. I personally found them a greater distraction separated out. They become more intrusive, especially given that in many instances, he does not break cleanly; for example, the simile in Book Nine, where Nisus is compared to a lion (Aeneid 9.339-41) begins in the middle of a sentence, which is left hanging as Cobbold begins a new indented paragraph. The intrusion would not be so irritating were it not that Vergil’s similes are treated inconsistently throughout the work. Some similes are not indented; some are transformed so that they are no longer similes but simply extra descriptive detail.

Cobbold quite openly takes liberties with what Vergil actually writes. For the sake of clarity, names and epithets are left out, extra details are included, characters are given speech where there is no explicit speech. One striking example of the omission of a name is in Book Two; as Aeneas searches for his lost wife and is then confronted and comforted by her ghost, Cobbold fails to reproduce Vergil’s repetition of ‘Creusa’ and so loses the pathos – the emotional impact – of the chant-like effect of the repetition. Cobbold is translating (perhaps ‘interpreting’ is better) for the reader who is unfamiliar with the subject. However, as with his treatment of the similes, Cobbold is inconsistent. For example, in the battle sequences in Book Ten, many names are left out, while names are included in Books Nine and Eleven. Cobbold makes use of anachronistic (and intrusive) bullet-points in place of the important catalogues he otherwise seeks to avoid by the omission of names, although I have my doubts as to whether bullet-points make any more sense in a novel than in an epic poem.
Reviews

The edition also includes sketched illustrations (often taking liberties with some details), marginal plot-notes, and five appendices. The first appendix includes very brief summaries of the plot in each of the twelve books, although Books Five and Six are treated together. Appendix Two gives a truncated version of Roman history, including those dates that the translator feels it is important to include. A set of family trees fills Appendix Three, although, with perhaps the single exception of the short tree of Latinus’ family, they are rather uninformative. Some useful discussion-questions (of the kind most frequently employed by examiners and lecturers) appear in Appendix Four and are followed by a somewhat selective list of ‘Main Characters’ from both the narrative and Roman History and Legend in Appendix Five. This edition would have benefited from some extra proof-reading. Every so often a word, or even an entire phrase, appears twice in a sentence (sometimes even in a row) where it should have been deleted. Indeed, in one instance, a word has in fact been struck-through, but not actually deleted.

Cobbold sets out to give the public an Aeneid that is fresh and lively by presenting it as a novel. He tries to tread that very fine line which preserves the dignity and flow associated with epic, while simultaneously maintaining the speed and energy of the story. Certainly the translation reads very easily; the story is a page-turner and the language and style is more accessible than W.F. Jackson Knight’s version, and even at times David West’s excellent translation. Yet Cobbold falls too far to the energy side of the line, and so, despite that accessibility, this version lacks grandeur and majesty; it ceases to be epic. As such, I have doubts as to whether this translation will replace West and Jackson Knight as the versions studied in schools and university courses. While it serves as an excellent introduction to the story of Aeneas and the establishment of the Roman Race, its style and tone, and sometimes even its details, are too far from Vergil to be of real academic usefulness.

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