

THE FIRST EDITION of the *Hymn to Liberty* was published in Paris in 1825, with a parallel French translation by Stanislas Julien, in the second volume of Fauriel's collection of Greek folksongs (*Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne, recueillis et publiés par C. Fauriel*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1825, vol. II, pp. 435-88). It also came out as an offprint: Διονυσίου Σαλωμού, Ζακυνθίου, Ὑμνος εἰς τὴν Ἐλευθερίαν/*Dithyrambe sur la Liberté*, par Dionysios Salomos, de Zante. Traduit du grec moderne par Stanislas Julien. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1825.

In his foreword to the poem, the publisher explained why he had included it in the collection: "The next work has nothing to do with the folksongs of Greece. It was written last May by Mr D. Salomos, a very young, very erudite poet gifted with a lively imagination [...] We have added it to the end of [Mr Fauriel's]¹ collection in order to offer the reader the opportunity to compare this folk poetry, so interesting for its natural grace and originality, with Greek poetry that has been fashioned in the school of the great models of antiquity. We owe the translation to Mr Stanislas Julien, known for his elegant rendering into French of the Greek poem by Kolouthos, *The Rape of Helen*, and *The Greek Patriotic Lyre* by Kalvos of Zante."²

Stanislas Julien (1797-1873) was a linguistic phenomenon. One need only consider the fact that he also translated the *Rape of Helen* (philological edition) into German, English, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. However, he has gone down in the history of French literary studies as an eminent Orientalist, most notably a Sinologist. Through his original work (philological, historical, anthropological, lexicographical) and his teaching, but above all through his numerous translations, he shed light on still impenetrable cultures and laid the foundations for a scientific approach to them in France. His time with the classics was

1. The *Hymn* was included with the collection on the publisher's initiative. Fauriel was away from Paris at the time.

2. See *Chants populaires*, *op. cit.*, p. 437. The translation of Kalvos's *Lyre* had been published in French under the title *La Lyre patriotique de la Grèce*.

brief. In 1821, he was appointed to deputise for his tutor at the *Collège de France*, but soon afterwards he changed direction. By 1824, the year in which he translated Kalvos, he was already publishing his first translation from Chinese into Latin.

We do not know how comfortable he was with modern Greek. At all events, the translation of the *Hymn* indicates problems of comprehension and an inadequate knowledge of context. However, we must suppose that some sloppy renderings were due to pressure of time, since the volume was already in the press as he was doing the translation. Otherwise, it is hard to explain how the same words are translated correctly in one place and inappropriately in another. This is strikingly illustrated in lines in two successive verses, Nos. 68 and 69:

v. 68: *Και των Χριστιανών τα χεῖλη / φωτιά εφώναζαν, φωτιά.*

Et les chrétiens leur répondent en murmurant l'arrêt de leur trépas.

v. 69: *Λεονταρόψυχα εκτυπιούνται, / Πάντα εφώναζαν φωτιά,*

Les Grecs braves comme des lions, se battaient en criant toujours feu,

As far as we know, the poet did not complain about the standard of the translation. However, Julien's mistakes seem to have alarmed him and he would certainly have discussed them with his close circle. In anticipation of the English translation, and while the Italian version was still being printed, on 8 June 1825 he wrote to his confidant Loudovikos Stranis: "As for [the English translator] Mr Sheridan, write to him as soon as you can, I pray you, for my honour. Indeed, you may write and ask him to tarry some fifteen days more, when you may send him the Italian translation, in which he may have complete confidence, and with which, tell him, I am well content."³

The next day, as though on his own initiative, Stranis wrote to Andreas Louriotis, the envoy of the Greek government in London: "Mr Zaïmi who is now here [on Zakynthos] has informed me that Mr. Sheridan the son of the celebrated orator means to translate [the *Hymn*]. Fearing that he may introduce in his translation the same mistakes into which Mr. Julien has unwarily fallen, and which Mr. Clonares⁴ has not

3. See *Διονυσίου Σολωμού Άπαντα*, vol. III: *Άλληλογραφία*, edited and annotated by Linos Politis. Athens: Ikaros, 1991, letter 22, p. 105.

4. Christodoulos Klonaris, an associate of Koraïs and a friend of Fauriel, whom he helped to compile the volume of folksongs, had been sent the manuscript of the *Hymn* from London, after efforts to have it printed there had failed.

been able to rectify I have thought it necessary to write to him on the subject and I here enclose the letter which you will have the goodness to deliver.”⁵ The letter arrived too late, however, for the English translation had already been published.

The Italian translator, at any rate, was not disposed to do Julien any favours. Gaetano Grassetti devoted almost all the notes accompanying his own translation to the errors in the French version.

To be fair, however, apart from the out and out misunderstandings, most of the apparently arbitrary renderings are deliberate choices. The change in the title, for instance, (from *Ὕμνος* “hymn” to *Dithyrambe*), which Grassetti criticises, and such expressions as *dans les domaines de Bacchus* (for Solomos’s simple εἰς τ’ ἀμπέλια “in the vineyards”) betray a desire to hark back to the modern Greeks’ ancient Greek roots. And when Julien calls the Turks *la race musulmane*—using their religious identity, that is—he may simply be trying to clarify the fronts on which, and the causes for which, the War was being fought. These are, after all, commonplace phrases in the poetry of that time and in philhellenic literature. (The argument presented against the Holy Alliance’s condemnation of the Greek War of Independence, was that it was not a rebellion against a legitimate authority but a conflict between the Christian world and the Moslem tyrants. This, furthermore, is the spirit of the *Hymn*.)

One characteristic of this translation, however, is hyperbole. The elegiac and the heroic element, the atrocities—all are exaggerated. Everything is great and terrible. Adjectives galore, usually not very forceful, accompany the nouns: tears are *lavish*; the traces of glory *immortal*; the onslaught *noble*; the darkness *thick*; the touch *magical*; the skeleton *wan and fleshless*; the eye of the (Austrian) eagle *piercing*; the weapons *dazzling*; etc. etc. Emotions are charged, additions made, images developed and coloured, giving the poem a different feel. An overflow of romanticism? It would have been too early for that in the France of the time. Julien is obviously trying to lend the prosaic text “poetic wings”. Here and there he succeeds.

5. Stranis’s letter was published by Loukia Droulia in *Γύρω στις πρώτες σολωμικές εκδόσεις και μεταφράσεις*, offprint from *Μνημόσυνον Σοφίας Αντωνιάδη*. Venice, 1974, pp. 385-6. I use Linos Politis’ translation from the edition *Διονυσίου Σολωμού Άπαντα*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

In the philhellenic climate of the time, and in a generally receptive intellectual environment that was ready to embrace the national movements and to get to know the cultural treasures of the peoples who were coming to rebirth, the *Hymn* was warmly received in France.

In a review by M.-A. Jullien of Paris titled "Progress of the Sciences and the Arts in 1824" and published in the *Revue encyclopédique*, we read: "Many of our compatriots—Mr Fauriel, who has published a prose translation of the *Greek folksongs*, one of our most important tragic poets, Mr Lemerrier, who has translated the same [kind of] songs into French verse, sometimes with moving simplicity and manly vigour, Mr Stanislas Julien, a young philologist who has translated into elegant prose the lovely *Dithyramb for Liberty* by Mr Salomos and other modern Greek poems—have begun to open up for us a new source of literary treasures."⁶

The same periodical contains a critique of the *Hymn* signed by one B.J.: "Mr Stanislas Julien has many times translated the literary wealth of modern Greece into our language. Indeed, we have lately presented the *Hellenic Patriotic Lyre* to our readers. The *Dithyramb* which he publishes now is equal to the aforementioned work." The critic then goes on to present the poem, which "recalls, in its inspired scheme, its bold ideas, and its wealth of detail, the art of Pindar, with whom the poet in fact compares himself (v. 86)."

All the same, B.J. comments rather condescendingly on the lines he quotes and concludes with an interesting observation: "What is more important to point out to the young Greek author of the *Dithyramb* is that the passion which fires him should never make him forget his fundamental theme: it leads to such ambiguity that sometimes one does not know whom he is talking about."⁷

In the second volume of his publication, Lemerrier, who translated into French and printed a collection of folksongs in 1825, also mentions Kalvos, Solomos, and Julien's translation: "The depth of the ideas and the sentiments of the Zakynthian

6. See *Revue encyclopédique*, No. 25 (Jan. 1825): 13-14.

7. See *Revue encyclopédique*, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-6. The historian L. Ciampolini mentioned the same problem later, speaking of *amfibologia*, and specifically referred to verse 93, "which confused Mr Julien". See M. Vitti, *Giudizi di L. Ciampolini e di G. Montani su Dionisio Solomòs*. Rome, 1960, offprint from the *Bibliotechina della «Rassegna di cultura e vita scolastica»*, year XIII, No. 10, 31 October 1959.

poet [Kalvos] would not have been better brought out by the effect of metre and rhyme. The same applies to the *Dithyramb* of Solomos, another poet from Zakynthos, which the inspiration and the good taste of the same translator have rendered into our language in classic style.”⁸

We do not know the size of the print-run for Fauriel’s book of folksongs, which was the vehicle by which the poem was disseminated, nor how many offprints of the *Hymn* were produced. The fact remains that, through this publication, at the crucial point in the War, Solomos managed to send his message to the world “which wants to know what we are doing and what we are thinking”.

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8. Népomucène L. Lemercier, *Chants héroïques des montagnards et matelots grecs*, vol. II: *Suite des chants héroïques et populaires des soldats et matelots grecs*. Paris, 1825, p. 123.