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## II

KENNETH J. DOVER

### EXPURGATION OF GREEK LITERATURE

The expurgator omits from the text which he edits or translates whatever is likely, in his view, to harm the reader. The 'bowdlerizer' achieves the same purpose by substituting harmless for harmful words and expressions, and I shall treat bowdlerization as a particular species of expurgation.

If we look at those editions and translations of Plato's *Symposium* and the plays of Aristophanes which have been published during the last four hundred years in Britain, France and Germany, it is immediately apparent that in Germany the expurgator has been given very little licence to intervene in the dissemination of classical literature. In the English-speaking world, on the other hand, he has intervened, until recently, to great effect. It follows necessarily that in surveying the history of expurgation, with particular reference to Plato and Aristophanes, I shall often mention British scholars who, though influential in their own day, were of little significance in the history of scholarship. This will invest part of my paper with a somewhat parochial character; but having been brought up at school, and even to some extent at university, on expurgated texts, and having been personally acquainted with people who produced such texts, I think I understand both the ethos and the effect of expurgation. Since most of us nowadays find it essentially ludicrous, it is not always easy, in discussing it, to

resist the temptation to be facetious. I shall, however, argue in the last part of this paper that the history of expurgation is not simply a phenomenon of the history of Western morals and manners in general but also a reflex of changes of attitude towards classical literature in particular.

During the first part of the eighteenth century anyone who wanted to read Plato in English used translations made not directly from the Greek but from the French translation published by André Dacier in 1699. Dacier's Plato amounted to only ten dialogues, and did not include either *Phaedrus* or the *Symposium*. In the 1760's the eccentric and adventurous Floyer Sydenham, former Fellow of Wadham and Rector of Esher, conceived the project of making a new English translation of Plato, and this project was partially realised in 1761, when he published nine dialogues, including the *Symposium*. Sydenham subjected the *Symposium* to drastic and unprecedented alteration: he transformed the homosexual relations which are fundamental to it into heterosexual relations, rendering ἐρώμενος and παιδικά sometimes as 'beloved', sometimes as 'mistress', and consistently using the feminine gender of all pronouns referring to the object of love. So 178 d 4-e 3 becomes:

If a man in love be found committing a base action, or suffering base usage from any, through cowardice, or without taking his revenge, he is not in so much pain at being seen by his father, by his intimates, or by any other person, as at being seen by his mistress. The same effect we see it has upon the party beloved, to be more ashamed of her lover's sight than of the eyes of the whole world, if she be discovered doing aught dishonourable.

A reader unacquainted with the original must then suppose that the « army composed of lovers and their beloved » adumbrated by Phaidros in the next sentence is an army comprising both sexes. Sydenham may have believed that he had guarded against this misapprehension by saying in his preface (15):

The speech of Phaedrus... takes the word Love in a general sense, so as to comprehend love towards persons of the same sex, commonly called Friendship, as well as that towards persons of a different sex, peculiarly and eminently styled Love.

This provision is plainly frustrated by the fact that we usually think of friendship as fully reciprocated ; and when we find  $\tau\omega\iota\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\iota\acute{\epsilon}$  Πατρόκλω $\iota$  (179 e 5) translated as « his friend Patroclus », we cannot easily see the point of the polemic in 180 a against Aischylos's interpretation of the relationship between Achilles and Patroklos, particularly when Sydenham suddenly compromises by translating Πατρόκλου  $\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\acute{\epsilon}$  (180 a 4) as « was the admirer of Patroclus ». He does not as a rule give up quite as easily as that ; for example, he turns Pausanias's words in 181 b 2 f.,

Men of that kind, in the first place, fall in love with women no less than with boys,

into :

Those who are most addicted to this love are, in the first place, the least disposed to friendship.

We begin to wonder how he will manage the story (216 c-219 d) of Alkibiades' attempted seduction of Sokrates. Our curiosity is abruptly satisfied when we reach 212 c, the end of Sokrates' speech, for Sydenham's *Symposium* stops there. He justifies himself in the following words (247 f.) :

The translator of Plato into English is almost unanimously advised by such of his friends, as are acquainted with the original, not to publish his translation of the last speech of this dialogue, that of Alcibiades, for fear of the offence it may give to the virtuous from the gross indecency of some part of it, the countenance it may possibly give to the vicious from the example of Alcibiades, and the danger into which it may bring the innocence of the young, by filling their

minds with ideas which it were to be wished they could always remain strangers to.

Sydenham had a precedent, to which, indeed, he refers (249). In the late seventeenth century Mme de Rochechouart de Mortemart, abbesse de Fontevrault, translated the *Symposium* into French and sent her translation to Racine for beautification. Racine revised it as far as 185 e and sent the composite translation to Boileau with a covering letter <sup>1</sup>, in which he says that although the speech of Alkibiades has been handled by the abbess in terms which tone down its grossness,

Mais avec tout cela, je crois que le mieux est de le supprimer. Outre qu'il est scandaleux, il est inutile; car ce sont les louanges, non de l'amour, dont il s'agit dans ce dialogue, mais de Socrate, qui n'y est introduit que comme un des interlocuteurs.

Racine too had a precedent. The *Symposium* had been translated into French by Loys Le Roy in 1558 <sup>2</sup> and presented by him to the Dauphin and Mary Stuart; he did not disguise its subject-matter, for he regarded Greek homosexuality as a historical accident not affecting the philosophical treatment of love as desire for beauty (13), but he did stop at 212 c, remarking (173 f.):

Les propos ensuyans d'Alcibiade et de Socrates sont pleins de grande liberté, qui lors regnait par toute la Grèce, mesmement en Athenes; et me semblent ne pouvoir aujourd'hui estre honnestement recitez.

<sup>1</sup> On the history of this translation, which was not published until 1732, cf. *Œuvres de J. Racine*, ed. P. MESNARD (Paris 1865-73), V 426 ff.; it seems that Racine's son wished his father's involvement with the *Symposium* to be regarded as a « péché de jeunesse » and therefore assigned it an implausibly early date. Mesnard does not print the translation from 186 a to the end, but it is available in the Didot edition of Racine (Paris 1851).

<sup>2</sup> I have not been able to consult the original edition, and quote from the revised edition (1581).

And he adds, in terms echoed by Sydenham two hundred years later :

J'ay estimé conseillé par mes amis d'obmettre le reste que Platon a adiousté seulement pour plaisir, servant au temps et à la licencieuse vie de son pays: sans proposer aux François parolles non convenantes à leurs meurs, ny convenantes à la religion Chrestienne.

Thomas Taylor's translation of Plato in 1804 made Alki-biades' speech available for the first time in English, and Taylor justly remarked (III 437 f.) that Sydenham had been ill advised to omit it.

It is one of the most essential parts of the dialogue. This will be at once evident, when it is considered that the intention of Plato in it was to exemplify in the character of Socrates, as one who has been initiated in the mysteries of love, the perfection of virtue which such an initiation is capable of effecting.

Nevertheless, Taylor adopted and left intact the rest of Sydenham's version, 'mistresses' and all. That was the unhappy situation of the *Symposium* in English when Shelley translated it afresh (it took him ten days) in 1818 and composed an introductory essay which he called *A Discourse on the Manners of the Antient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love*<sup>1</sup>. It was, as he said in a letter to T. L. Peacock<sup>2</sup> :

a subject to be handled with that delicate caution which either I cannot or I will not practise in other matters, but which here I acknowledge to be necessary.

<sup>1</sup> Available, together with the original translation, in J. A. NOTOPOULOS, *The Platonism of Shelley* (Durham, N.C. 1949), 404 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. F. L. JONES (Oxford 1964), II no. 475 (16 Aug. 1818).

He added :

Not that I have any serious thoughts of publishing either this discourse or the *Symposium*, at least till I return to England, when we may discuss the propriety of it.

Three years later he was even less sanguine, and wrote to T. J. Hogg<sup>1</sup> :

I have translated the *Symposium*, the *Ion* and part of the *Phaedrus*. I selected the first piece on account of the surpassing graces of the composition, but I have no intention of publishing it.

When his widow in the late 1830's was preparing his prose works for publication she came under very strong pressure from Leigh Hunt to expurgate the translation and omit the latter part of the *Discourse*<sup>2</sup>,

so that the common reader will think common love is meant—the learned alone will know what is meant.

Leigh Hunt offered her as a model the notes on *Phaedrus*, with partial translation, published by John Stuart Mill<sup>3</sup> in 1834, where the sex of the ἐρώμενος is systematically concealed by such expressions as « the person he loves » or « the object of his passion ». Mary Shelley concurred, but Leigh Hunt, possibly after looking again at the Sydenham translation reprinted by Taylor, suffered a fresh access of timidity, and she complains (*loc. cit.*) :

Now you change all this back into friendship—which makes the difficulty as great as ever. I wished in every way

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, II no. 667 (22 Oct. 1821).

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. F. L. JONES (Norman 1964), II no. 508 (Oct. 1839).

<sup>3</sup> 'Mills', simply, in Mary Shelley, *loc. cit.*; but the reference must be to « Notes on Some of the More Popular Dialogues of Plato, No. II: The Phaedrus », published anonymously by Mill in *The Monthly Repository*, N.S. VIII (1834), 404-420; 633-646.

to preserve as many of Shelley's OWN *words* as possible—and I was glad to do so under the new idea which you imported—but your alterations puzzle me mightily—I do not like *not* to abide by them—yet they destroy your own argument that different sexes would be understood and thus all is in confusion... I could not bring myself to leave the word *love* out entirely from a treatise on Love.

The outcome of Leigh Hunt's interventions and Mary Shelley's capitulations is at once apparent from a comparison of Shelley's 1818 manuscript with the publication of the work in 1840 as an item in his collected prose works. The cuts are marked in the 1840 edition by asterisks, but the changes of wording are not. In some places 'lover' has been turned into 'friend' (e.g. 179 a 3, 182 d 1), though not consistently. The intention is to hide from the reader all unmistakable allusions to homosexual seduction, bribery and consummation; this removes, for example, 182 a 7-b 7, on the variety of attitudes to  $\tau\ddot{o}\ \chi\alpha\dot{r}\iota\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota\epsilon\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\epsilon$  in the Greek world, and the whole of Alkibiades' story of his attempted seduction of Sokrates, but not the rest of Alkibiades' speech. Whether there are any genuine signs of inhibition in Shelley's own manuscript is open to question. « Those lovely persons » for « those beautiful boys and youths » in 211 d 4 looks rather like it<sup>1</sup>; but « his friend » for  $\tau\ddot{o}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  in 180 a 3, shortly after « his beloved Patroclus » in 179 e 5, could be attributed to a desire for stylistic variation, and the omission of the crucial sentence  $\sigma\ddot{\nu}\tau\omega\ \pi\ddot{\alpha}\nu\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\varsigma\ \gamma\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\dot{\lambda}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\eta\varsigma\ \gamma'\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\kappa\ \chi\alpha\dot{r}\iota\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota\epsilon$  in 185 b 4 to a mistaken belief that after  $\pi\ddot{\alpha}\nu\ \grave{\alpha}\nu\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\acute{\epsilon}\ \pi\acute{\rho}\theta\mu\eta\theta\acute{\epsilon}\iota\eta$  in b 3 the words are redundant<sup>2</sup>. The *Discourse* was renamed in 1840 *Essay on the Literature, the Arts and the Manners of the Athenians*, and the latter part of it was

<sup>1</sup> Sydenham, surprisingly, admits the male sex here and writes « beautiful youths and damsels », but the passage concerns the aesthetic appreciation of visual beauty in general rather than sexual response to beauty.

<sup>2</sup> No edition in Shelley's day (or for long after) adopted  $\pi\ddot{\alpha}\nu$  from Stobaeus's quotation of the passage.

dropped. Mary Shelley in her prefatory note gives the original title and disingenuously conveys the impression that her husband had left it incomplete :

It breaks off at the moment when the main subject is about to be discussed.

William Whewell's work, *The Platonic Dialogues for English Readers* (London 1859-61), a mixture of translation, paraphrase and summary, did not include the *Symposium* at all. Incidentally, it gave very short measure to *Phaedrus*, and it represented the Lysianic speech therein as contrasting not love with lust but love with friendship, a misrepresentation which accords ill with Whewell's retention of 'desire' and 'favours' in the context of 'friendship'. It was therefore not until the publication of Jowett's *Plato* in 1871 that the general reader in Britain was enabled by translators to see what relationship is fundamental to the argument of the *Symposium*. On the Continent the situation was quite different. Schleiermacher's *Plato* translation, published in 1804-9, consistently rendered ἐραστής and ἐρώμενος as 'Liebhaber' and 'Liebling', gave Alkibiades' speech in full (Schleiermacher regarded it as « der Gipfel und die Krone des ganzen Gesprächs »), and played no tricks with the gender of pronouns : in short, it was a translation designed to help the German reader to understand what Plato meant. Victor Cousin's French translation (Paris 1831) was almost as honest, though he made Patroklos 'l'ami', not 'l'amant', of Achilles, and he tends to speak of 'people' and 'persons' where the Greek is unambiguously masculine.

Let us at this point remind ourselves of Sydenham's reasons for omitting Alkibiades' speech—offence to the virtuous, countenance to the vicious, danger to the innocent—and explore in more detail what I described as the purpose of the expurgator : to omit what may harm the reader.

'Harm' is of two kinds. One is the harm of shock : the confrontation of the reader with passages so disgusting that

they turn his stomach or so horrifying and disturbing that they haunt his imagination and his dreams. There are passages in books which I would rather not have read, just as there are moments in plays and films which I would rather not have seen, and I like to think that all of us could say the same, though, since our individual histories are all different, it is not to be expected that any two of us would draw up an identical blacklist. The second kind of harm is the harm of temptation : the presentation of attractive and exciting images which promote in the reader a disposition to commit sinful, illegal, immoral, or offensive acts. No sooner have the labels, 'shock' and 'temptation', been enunciated than we see difficulties in assigning particular cases to one category or the other. It is a matter of common experience that shock can be diminished by familiarity, and actions which on first encounter repel absolutely can gradually take their places in the repertory of models available for imitation. It is equally observable that pictorial or verbal representations of things or actions which are alluring to most people are repulsive to some, and may be simultaneously shocking and tempting to the same person.

Those who have used expurgated editions of Greek texts may well gain the impression that the expurgator is exclusively preoccupied with the anatomy and functioning of the genito-urinary system, the bowels and the female breasts. A negative reason for this impression is that of two considerations which have motivated the expurgation or complete suppression of vernacular texts rooted in our own culture, one has no bearing on pagan texts written in an ancient language and the other, while relevant to translation, is irrelevant to the presentation of the original text : I refer to the avoidance of blasphemy and profanity and the avoidance of linguistic impropriety. As we see from two of Mary Shelley's letters <sup>1</sup>, the omission of irre-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, II no. 486, to Leigh Hunt (12 Aug. 1838); cf. no. 495, to Edwin Moxon (5 March 1839).

ligious passages from *Queen Mab* was an issue of the same kind as the omission of explicitly homosexual passages from the *Symposium*, and Leigh Hunt's anxieties were involved in both. This was at a time (1838) when the expurgated *Family Shakespeare* constructed by Thomas Bowdler in 1807 had run through several editions. Bowdler took objection to the freedom with which Shakespeare handled the names of God and Jesus Christ, and he systematically altered such expressions as «God save you!» to «Heaven save you!»<sup>1</sup>. Distinctively Catholic oaths and exclamations, however, were left intact, presumably because Catholics were not regarded as real Christians, and their oaths were merely quaint and exotic<sup>2</sup>. By the same token, Zeus could not be offended by the frequency of «By Zeus» in a Greek text, since he did not exist, and no one seems to have thought that the learner would acquire from the Greeks, by analogy, the habit of invoking God profanely. As for linguistic impropriety, it must be remembered that it is quite normal for a sophisticated language to regard as vulgar a great many words which have no bearing at all on sex, excretion or profanity. This is demonstrably true of Attic Greek and of English and French from the late seventeenth century onwards. Words of this kind were avoided by speakers and writers who wanted to be thought of as people of sensitivity and good breeding, and in England they were normally replaced in acting versions of Shakespeare by more refined, often more insipid words<sup>3</sup>. This is an area in which moral uprightness and social acceptability, moral shock and social disapproval, became deeply confused. But although a translator's choice of words might be greatly affected by considerations of social propriety, words in another language were not regarded as setting the learner a

<sup>1</sup> He shrank, however, from giving Henry V the improbable adjuration, «Cry Heaven for England! Harry! And St. George!».

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Noël PERRIN, *Dr Bowdler's Legacy* (British edition, London 1970), 74.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. N. PERRIN, *op. cit.*, 88 f., on the fate of 'grunt'.

bad social example which would put at risk his acceptance as a member of the educated class<sup>1</sup>.

However, the charge that the expurgator has always attached disproportionate importance to sex and excretion can be sustained by pointing to his indifference to any other kind of harm through shock. One of the most disgusting lines in Aristophanes is *Knights* 910. The Paphlagonian and the Sausage-seller are vying with each other in servility towards Demos, and when the Sausage-seller has said,

Look, here's a hare's tail for wiping your eyes,  
the Paphlagonian caps it with

Demos, blow your nose and wipe your fingers on my head !

Two English translators falter here. C. A. Wheelwright (Oxford 1837) says :

Then wipe and rub them on my head, O Demos !  
and J. H. Frere (London 1840) :

Wipe 'em, and then wipe it again, dear Demos, on my hair now !

No editor, however, deletes the passage. Dikaiopolis's « I fart » in *Acharnians* 30 fares worse. Thomas Mitchell in his edition of *Acharnians* (London 1835) simply omits the word πέρδομαι, creating an alcaic enneasyllable among the trimeters. In his 1820 translation he had rendered it « I hawk », as if the

<sup>1</sup> From Boileau's *Réflexions critiques* no. IX, appended to his translation of Pseudo-Longinus, *On the Sublime*, one has the impression that for him the propriety of a word in Greek was guaranteed by the fact that notable Greek authors had used it, so that the perfectly proper question, « Did Greek authors use *mots bas* ? » was short-circuited.

expulsion of mucus from the throat were less offensive than the expulsion of gas from the bowels ; and that indeed accords with the manners of Mitchell's time, although when King William IV spat on the dining-room floor he was felt to be affecting the manners of an old sea-captain rather ostentatiously.

Physical cruelty presents a clearer issue than the nuances of excretion. In *Odyssey* XXII 475-477 Homer describes the atrocious fate of Melanthios thus :

They cut off his nose and ears with cruel bronze, and tore out his genitals ( $\mu\eta\delta\epsilon\alpha\ \delta'$   $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\xi}\acute{\epsilon}\rho\upsilon\sigma\alpha\eta$ ), a feast of raw meat for dogs, and chopped off his hands and feet, in the anger of their hearts.

The translation by Butcher and Lang, first published in 1879 and a standard translation in Britain for two generations thereafter, changes this passage by substituting « drew forth his vitals » for « tore out his genitals »<sup>1</sup>. In respect of cruelty, there is little to choose between alternative gross mutilations or dismemberments ; but in respect of propriety, there was evidently an important difference to the translators between intestines and genitals, and no desire to spare the reader acquaintance with the savagery which went hand-in-hand with subtle and agreeable courtesies in the world of Odysseus. Producers of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century and the late seventeenth drastically modified Act III Scene 7 of *King Lear*, in which Gloucester's eyes are torn out, regarding the original as intolerable on stage. Bowdler, whose intention was

to exclude from this publication whatever is unfit to be read aloud by a gentleman to a company of ladies,

kept intact the blinding of Gloucester, while agreeing with earlier producers in deleting the reflections of the Porter, in

<sup>1</sup> So too Samuel BUTLER (London 1900).

Act II Scene 3 of *Macbeth*, on the physical effects of wine. Children's editions of *Gulliver's Travels* have followed the same tradition ; passages which described the functioning of living bodies were omitted, while it was not until 1940 that an editor omitted the bloody description of the decapitation of a Brobdingnagian criminal<sup>1</sup>. As for cruel words, looks and attitudes, even of the most senseless and unbelievable kind, e.g. the ending of de Maupassant's *Boule de Suif*, public tolerance seems always to have been high. Readers of Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop* were able to endure the horrifying way in which Quilp talks to his downtrodden wife (chapter 67) :

I'm glad your eyes are red with crying. It does my heart good to see your little nose so pinched and frosty,

but they would have protested had Dickens made Quilp say, in a mood of relaxed benevolence,

\* It does my heart good to see your little tits so pink and tasty.

Bowdler's phrase « unfit to be read aloud » raises the suspicion that the popular sentiment which he represented and reinforced was more concerned with the language of a text than with its substance, and a sentence on title-page gives colour to this suspicion :

Those words and expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family.

It was not, however, in England that linguistic considerations took precedence over moral substance, but in France ; and this is well illustrated by reference to Dikaiopolis's farting in *Acharnians* 30. In the translation by Louis Poinsinet de Sivry (Paris 1784) πέρδομαι becomes :

<sup>1</sup> N. PERRIN, *op. cit.*, 228.

La colique me prend; j'avale de l'anis. Ma colique dissipée, ...

A footnote laboriously explains :

Aristophane ne parle point de l'anis, mais il en décrit l'effet, en termes que la délicatesse de notre langue repousse.

Nicholas Artaud in 1841 is bolder (« je pète »), but this is exceptional in view of his complaint (p. v) :

La licence audacieuse permise au théâtre d'Athènes présentait des obstacles presque insurmontables, dans une langue qui pousse aussi loin que la nôtre le respect des bien-séances.

That his concern is with words, not things, is clear from the numerous passages in which his footnotes explain what the translation conceals, e.g. *Acharnians* 1220 f. :

Et moi, je veux me coucher; je n'en puis plus, j'ai besoin de soulagement.

Artaud comments :

La crudité des termes... ne peut se rendre en français,

and he continues in uninhibited Latin :

*Tentigine rumpor, et in tenebris futuere gestio.*

By such means linguistic proprieties are observed, while at the same time the reader is left in no doubt about what the author meant. This spirit informs Mme de Rochechouart's translation of the *Symposium*, for whereas it is absolutely clear from her treatment of Alkibiades' speech that Alkibiades tried to tempt Sokrates into performing a homosexual physical act, she omits

entirely a passage in Aristophanes' speech (191 b-c) which would have compelled her to name the genitals in a context concerned with their reproductive function.

In Britain expurgation of Aristophanes by translators went much further, in accordance with a principle clearly expressed by L. H. Rudd in 1867 (p. viii of the preface to his translation) :

[The translator] undertook with himself that his pages should be as free, not only from every expression, but from every hint or suggestion of licence, as is happily the best light literature of this day.

The consequence of this principle was mutilation of Aristophanes on a grand scale. *Acharnians*, which has 1234 lines in the standard numeration of Brunck, is reduced to 1106 by Mitchell, and Holden's eighth edition of 1887 adds only 21 lines to that. The English schoolboy in the nineteenth century was usually condemned to read an *Acharnians* which contained scraps of a phallic song without a phallos and in which part of Dikaipolis's dialogue with the Megarian and most of his dialogue with the messengers from the wedding are rendered curiously abrupt and disjointed by removal of the humorous point. In their anxiety to hide the facts of life from the young learner British editors were on occasion prepared not only to omit but also to indulge their talent for composition and rewrite. A. Sloman's Terence, « carefully expurgated for use in Schools », is a case in point. In his *Phormio* (1887) the pimp Dorio is listed in the *dramatis personae* not as 'leno' but as 'mercator', and the purpose for which he keeps girls like Pamphila is systematically concealed. This necessitates alteration of line 83,

*ea seruiebat lenoni impurissimo,*

to

*ea homini seruiebat impurissimo.*

Similarly, in Geta's story of how Phaedria fell in love at first sight with Phanium and at once approached her old nurse (112-113),

*sibi ut eius faciat copiam*  
*obsecrat*

becomes

*ut eam sibi liceat uisere.*  
*obsecrat*

Here the contrast between Britain and Germany is striking. For example, in the opening scene of *Knights*, where the humour of one passage (21-29) is founded on the common tendency to quicken the pace in masturbation, the point is hidden in English translations and editions, though Mitchell daringly adds to his truncated translation the note :

and the purity of our manners fortunately forbids all explanation of the action, by which the dialogue was made more piquant to the dissolute and worthless audience.

Seeger (1845) is almost as coy, since he does not translate  $\omega\sigma\pi\epsilon\rho$   $\delta\epsilon\phi\mu\epsilon\nu\varsigma$ , but his stage-direction « mit unanständiger Geberde » gives the reader a little more help. Yet Droysen in 1835 had already given a straightforward translation, « wie wenn du dich wächst », and so too E. Born in 1855, « als treibst du Unzucht mit dir selbst »<sup>1</sup>.

The hostility of expurgators towards excretion seems to me a trivial matter not requiring explanation or comment. Their preoccupation with sex is much more important, though by no means mysterious. They were aware that in the majority of the young<sup>2</sup> the impulse to sexual activity is strong and recurrent

<sup>1</sup> Curiously, by over-specific translation of  $\tau\delta\delta\epsilon\mu\alpha$  as 'Vorhaut' Born vitiates the joke in the punch-line of the passage.

<sup>2</sup> The editors of texts were concerned primarily with the education of boys. Their assumptions about the sexuality of girls were different.

and the imagination easily fired by a representation, even sometimes by a hint, of sexual freedom going beyond what was then treated as permissible in the family and at school. Sex in Greek literature was therefore regarded as doing harm by temptation and example, while the representation of non-sexual wrongdoing did not seem to offer the young reader any intrinsically tempting model for imitation. It is, after all, true that the allure of bribery, lying or pride is not to be compared, in respect of its force, persistence and ubiquity, with the allure of sexual activity. As for bloodshed and violence, a degree of ferocity in war and of harshness in the repression of wrongdoing, both within limits prescribed by law, were understandably accepted as necessary for the survival and cohesion of the community ; and if an expurgator ever wondered whether the treatment of Melanthios might promote in the young reader a disposition to cruelty, he may well have considered that the opportunity to commit atrocities—unlike the opportunity to perform sexual acts—is so rare that the representation of cruelty in ancient literature had no real bearing on the moral life of the reader. The values and presuppositions of the expurgator are open to criticism, most of all, perhaps, on the ground that any morality which attaches special importance to sexual acts is taking the easy way out ; it is so much easier to define such acts, so much easier to decide, « Have I or haven't I ? », than it is to draw the boundary between gluttony and a hearty appetite or to decide when one has been helpful enough or generous enough in the relief of suffering. However, the expurgator's principles were not irrational, and it is commonly forgotten that many expurgators, much of the time, believed themselves to be helping to save souls. Commonly forgotten, because so many items in the history of expurgation seem to us comic, and so few modern Christians think that expurgation contributes to the salvation of anyone's soul—some, indeed, think that no one is damned, no matter what he has done ; but whatever view we hold of its premisses, to underrate the religious motive of the expurgator or to dismiss

it as hypocritical would argue a failure of imagination on our part. In this respect there is an important difference between expurgation and political censorship. Of course, the culturally dominant element in any society tends to construct rules governing what may be said or portrayed, to equate conformity with virtue, even with righteousness, to protect itself against violation of these rules as it protects itself against bloodshed and theft, and to maintain some of the rules through an unthinking social solidarity long after they have ceased to awaken any genuine moral response in most individuals. But the essential purpose of political censorship in all ages is to conceal from the reader images and ideas which might tempt him to disobey or at least to scrutinize the justification of the authority exercised by autocrat, class, party or gang. Expurgation differs from censorship of that kind in so far as it is genuinely concerned with the well-being of the reader and not with the maintenance of somebody's power. A letter written by Gladstone to Lord Lyttelton in 1841, at a time when Gladstone was thinking much about education (in connection with the foundation of Trinity College, Glenalmond) is of great interest as showing the terms in which the issue of expurgation could be discussed in Britain at that time<sup>1</sup>. It appears that Gladstone's views had been sought on a project for a new edition of classical texts which would systematically expurgate them for school use. It is clear, too, that this was regarded as a new idea, for he refers to the use of unexpurgated texts as « the present practice »—and in fact, although the expurgated translations of Aristophanes by Mitchell and Wheelwright had been on the market for some years, expurgated editions of the Greek text were still a novelty. Gladstone, while agreeing that « a play or two [of Aristophanes] might be selected for the initiation of boys and disengaged », thought wholesale expurgation 'impracticable', pointing out

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, ed. D. C. LATHBURY (London 1910), II no. 381 (5 March 1841). I am indebted to Dr B. H. Harrison for the reference.

that if we are to be consistent in our purpose we shall remove « all unchristian passages in all authors that boys are to read. » And he says :

[This principle] goes upon the supposition, which I imagine would prove totally false, that young persons up to the age at which they have gained an acquaintance with a considerable range of classical authors, would hereby be kept free from the notions it is desired to avoid...

I cannot deny or palliate the fact that mischief does arise from the present practice: and though I much doubt whether, generally speaking, natural appetite and curiosity together do not greatly outrun information thus acquired, and anticipate any temptation it might bring, yet if a practical man could be found to say, 'I have seen much of boys educated this way and also that, and I find the one class much purer than the other', I should willingly choke my own suspicions.

Gladstone's commonsense view that classical texts do not give the young significantly more information than may be acquired through « natural appetite and curiosity » (a curiosity largely stimulated and partly satisfied, one presumes, by talk among schoolfellows) makes a striking contrast with the unworldly view expressed in 1876 by Paley <sup>1</sup>, who objected to expurgation both as misrepresenting the « whole tenor and character of a play » and as « serving no really good purpose », since

no young student need read verses that are certain not to be set nor in any way asked for.

But it is clear, from the fact that the only three authors named by Gladstone in the course of his letter are Horace, Juvenal and Aristophanes, that when he uses words such as 'information', 'unchristian' and 'pure' he is talking exclusively about sex. It is equally clear that for him the maintenance of 'purity' was

<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to his edition of *Acharnians* (Cambridge 1876), p. vii.

more important than the attainment of an accurate understanding of the Greeks and Romans.

It goes without saying, as Paley half saw, that the readers of an expurgated text receive a deficient impression of the author's personality and intention and of the society for which he wrote. When a translation is not only cut but also bowdlerized, their impression may be in direct conflict with the truth. For example, *Acharnians* 274-276,

to seize her round the waist, lift her up, put her down  
and stone her fruit, O Phales, Phales !

is 'translated' by Mitchell :

then to seize the sweet intruder  
and with kiss, and nothing ruder,  
to compress her till her soul  
through her lips comes warm and whole...

Cf. C. J. Billson (1882) :

and tell her all your tender story  
with sweet caresses,

and R. Y. Tyrrell (1883) :

how sweet her honey'd lip to taste !

—with which Seeger (1845) makes a vigorous contrast :

ins Gras zu werfen, zu zücht'gen, ha !  
Phales, Phales !

Cf. Artaud :

de la jeter à terre, et la posséder.

Let us not exaggerate : there is no great difference between the last two and Poinsinet de Sivry's « de tirer un bon parti de cette rencontre », Droysen's « sie hinzuwerfen und—Phales komm,

O Phales komm ! », Frere's « making an immediate booty of her innocence and beauty » and Hickie's (1853) « and roll her in the grass », but Mitchell, Billson and Tyrrell are peculiar in conveying the impression that Dikaiopolis is singing not of rape as a punishment for trespassing but of flirtatious kissing. The possibility that they themselves actually shared that impression must be entertained—but not, I think, for long. In nineteenth-century England there was a great difference between the way men talked among themselves about sex and the way allusion was made to it in print for a reading public of both sexes, and we must not infer private ignorance from public practice. In any case, it is seldom possible to demonstrate misunderstanding on the part of translators, given their freedom of recourse to the principle enunciated by Tyrrell in his preface :

In places which conflict with our notions of delicacy, I have assumed some latitude, sometimes even introducing a different thought.

Cf. Billson's preface :

Some passages have been thus necessarily omitted, and others... have been, as the only alternative to their omission, hopelessly modernized.

There is, however, one aspect of expurgation which reveals a fundamental misconception at work among British scholars. Tradition and predilection alike assured them that classical Greek authors were exemplary; in many respects, notably linguistic sensitivity and moral philosophy, the Greeks seemed to be exceedingly civilized ; and yet Greek society and literature contained so much that was reprehensible by the standards of British culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What most of us now feel to be the grotesque self-confidence and complacency of our immediate forbears, their pervasive assumption that the right way to live had been found, induced them to

see a contradiction within Greek morals and manners, and they were reluctant to solve it by admitting alternative conceptions of civilization or by saying that in some ways the ancients were right and the moderns wrong. The simplest of the explanations offered was that the obscenity of the ancients was residual : being nearer than we to primitive simplicity<sup>1</sup>, they attained great heights in certain directions but still retained defects now remedied by Christianity, progress and what Mitchell (on *Acharnians* 230) called « the dignity and purity of modern ideas ». In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the awakening of interest in anthropology generated a tendency to excuse the obscenity of comedy as a ritual ingredient, as if the Athenians had a religious duty to laugh at jokes which would otherwise have disgusted them ; this tendency underlies the first chapter of Gilbert Murray's *Aristophanes : a Study* (Oxford 1933)<sup>2</sup>. Rogers erred curiously in saying :

To the poet himself the charge of indelicacy would have been quite incomprehensible.

Rogers must have been aware, had he stopped to think, that Aristophanes, as a native Athenian, was perfectly familiar with the connotations of *αισχρός* and could not have found 'incomprehensible' something which was easily comprehended by the philosophers, orators and historians of his time. A second explanation envisaged the comic poet as a man of refinement compelled by the circumstances of the dramatic festival to gratify what Mitchell called « the dissolute and worthless audience » and Paley (p. vii) « the mob for whom [jokes of this kind] were meant ». Unfortunately, the absence of evidence,

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell ([1820], p. xxvi n.) hesitated between 'simplicity' and 'depravity' as the appropriate characterization of Dionysiac religion, and was inclined to see sinister oriental influence at work. It seems (xxiii-xxviii; 42 f. n.) that Mitchell did not find it easy, and did not expect his readers to find it easy, to comprehend a religion in which there was room for laughter as well as solemnity.

<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that Murray became a professor of Greek as early as 1889.

other than the plays themselves, for Aristophanes' own opinions, tastes and wishes precludes discussion of the extent to which he may have inserted for the gratification of the mob jokes which he himself found disgusting. A third explanation, which in one form or another goes back to antiquity, turned Aristophanes into a moralist who wished not to pander to the licentiousness of the spectators but to shame them by presenting vice in its true colours. This was the view taken by Porson :<sup>1</sup>

Among the ancients, plain-speaking was the fashion... They were accustomed to call a spade a spade... In all Aristophanes' indecency, there is nothing that can allure, but much that must deter. He never dresses up the most detestable vices in an amiable light; but generally, by describing them in their native colours, makes the reader disgusted with them.

Porson's words are echoed, with due acknowledgement to him, by B. D. Walsh (p. LXIII) and Wheelwright (p. ix), whose translations both appeared a couple of years after the publication of Porson's *Tracts*.

Vice is always depicted in its native hideousness.  
(Walsh)

He never put obscenity but in the mouths of obscene characters, and so supplies it as to give his hearers a disgust for such unseemly habits... Morality, I confess, deserves a purer vehicle; yet I contend that his purpose was honest, and I dare believe went further towards reforming the loose Athenians than all the indecisive positions of the philosophers.

(Wheelwright)

These statements are untrue. The phallic hymn sung by Dikaiopolis treats sodomy and rape as good fun ; to categorize him as an « obscene character » entangles us in a circular

<sup>1</sup> In his review of Brunck's Aristophanes edition (1783), reprinted in *Tracts and Miscellaneous Criticisms of the Late Richard Porson Esq.* (London 1835), II 11 ff.

argument, and it cannot alter the fact that the last scene of the play, in which he triumphantly staggers off to bed, penis erect, fondling the small, firm breasts of two girls, is likely to awaken a sympathetic response in any young male reader. The propositions of Walsh and Wheelwright illustrate how a careful statement by a first-rate scholar (in this case, Porson), deserving some attention, can be taken out of context and exaggerated by his epigoni. Porson was contrasting Aristophanes with Restoration comedy, which notoriously « dresses up in an amiable light » the pursuit of other people's wives, and he may even have had in mind works such as *Fanny Hill*, which presents in language of calculated propriety a falsely alluring picture of the « swinging London » of the eighteenth century. He was not wholly sure of himself, as his switch from 'never' to 'generally' within the same sentence betrays (and it is uncertain whether or not « the most detestable vices » is a mere rhetorical synonym for « extra-marital sex »), but we can see what he meant. Believing, as he did, that « the world is greatly altered for the better », he may have believed also that the use of blunt and offensive terms for sexual organs and acts had the effect of turning the reader against what those words denoted. In this he was mistaken, for coarse words often have a stimulating effect. Many expurgators must have appreciated, from their own experience, this power of language, and we are again reminded (cf. p. 62) of the difficulty of drawing clear distinctions between harm through shock and harm through temptation, or between impropriety in linguistic acts and immorality in non-linguistic acts.

To explain the co-existence of elements in a past civilization which in our own are regarded as incompatible is not merely permissible but necessary ; yet there is a difference between explanation encumbered by a load of presuppositions which our civilization has generated and explanation which is prepared to wait patiently until enough data are ascertained and to make the effort to look at a past civilization through the eyes of those who

participated in it. Mary Shelley understood this when she wrote to Maria Gisborne<sup>1</sup>, with reference to her husband's translation of the *Symposium* :

It is true that in many particulars it shocks our present manners, but no one can be a reader of the works of antiquity unless they can transport themselves from these to other times and judge not by our but by their morality.

Many would have assented to this at the level of general principles, but they would not necessarily have agreed with one another in assessing the relative importance of those ingredients of Greek culture, or of any particular work of Greek literature, which we should make the effort to understand. Racine was content (cf. p. 58) to discard Alkibiades' speech from the *Symposium* because it was 'inutile': it was not, in his view, on the subject « dont il s'agit dans ce dialogue ». To Mary Shelley, on the other hand<sup>2</sup>,

the beauty of the piece consists in Agathon's, Socrates' and Alcibiades' speeches—the rest are of minor importance.

A. D. Lindsay, in his preface to a collection of Plato translations which includes the 1840 edition of Shelley's *Symposium*<sup>3</sup>, says :

Shelley's translation omits several passages in the *Symposium*, but as these are not of importance for the subject matter of the dialogue, it has been thought best to leave the translation without change.

Lindsay was a philosopher<sup>4</sup>, and that tells us something about his criteria of 'importance'. The literary critic will have different criteria, asking what was important in the eyes of the author,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, I no. 54 (17 Aug. 1818).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 60 n. 2 above.

<sup>3</sup> *Plato's Dialogues on Poetic Inspiration* (London 1910), p. xviii.

<sup>4</sup> He hated obscenity. I recall an occasion in 1948 on which he refused, with anger and impatience, to spend time discussing the merits of a scholarship candidate who had expressed approval of the frank simplicity of *Peace* 868-870.

recognising (one hopes) that confidence in answering that question must not be pushed too far, and preferably not pushing at all before the help of the historian has been sought. The moralist who exploits ancient literature will have his own opinion on what matters. Now, since sex observably matters a very great deal to a very great many people, and happiness or unhappiness may turn upon physical details on a very small scale (though hardly as small as the details which make the difference between an exhilaratingly good and a depressingly bad performance of a song), precise enquiry into Greek sexual behaviour is required of the historian of Greek society, for whom the most important ingredients of the *Symposium* are Pausanias's speech and the seduction-narrative of Alkibiades; the rest of Alkibiades' speech, one passage of Aristophanes' speech and some of the implications of Agathon's speech take second place, and the remainder of the work, including Sokrates' speech, is of much less significance. When Shelley wrote his *Discourse*, he not only perceived and described, with a clarity four or five generations ahead of his time, the part played by homosexuality in the Greek world, but addressed himself also to the problem of «the action... by which the Greeks expressed this passion»—or, as it is commonly put in prurient gossip, «What did they *do*?». Although he was well aware, as a cancelled sentence in his manuscript shows<sup>1</sup>, of what was implied by passages in Aristophanes and Theokritos (he must have had Lakon and Komatas in mind), he found himself unable to believe that sodomy lay at the heart of the romantic relationships to which speakers in the *Symposium* allude, and he preferred to think that spontaneous ejaculation occurred,

[as an] almost involuntary consequence of a state of abandonment in the society of a person of surpassing attractions, when the sexual connection cannot exist.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. NOTOPOULOS, *op. cit.*, 411; 535 f.

This suggestion, implausible on a variety of grounds, and incidentally rendered otiose by iconographic evidence not known to Shelley<sup>1</sup>, was the product of strong feeling rather than hard thinking, but he deserves honour for raising the question.

Or so, at least, it seems to many of us nowadays, because we want to re-create in our minds, as accurately as we can, the Greeks' experience of human life. If, however, we are principally concerned to exploit our Greek heritage for examples which will fortify us in upholding the traditional values of our own culture, we may be inclined to dismiss Shelley's question as pointless or perverse. A certain equilibrium between these two fundamentally different attitudes to classical literature was maintained by Sir Richard Livingstone's influential book *The Greek Genius and its Meaning to us* (Oxford 1912). Livingstone, who interested himself greatly in general educational topics, set out in *The Greek Genius* to contrast Greek with twentieth-century culture, and was willing to argue that there was much of value and interest to be sought precisely in the alien character of the former. He recognised the scale on which German scholarship had contributed to our understanding of the Greek world as it really was ; yet it has been said of him<sup>2</sup> that he regarded Thucydides (whom he translated elegantly) less as a real person narrating real events than as a quarry furnishing a rich supply of 'great thoughts', and he remarks in one passage (25) of *The Greek Genius* :

It is at times chastening to remember, as it is in general better to forget, that many of the most graceful Greek vases are offerings dedicated to unnatural vice.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Greek Homosexuality* (London 1978), 98 f.

<sup>2</sup> Private communication to me by a colleague. I am also told by an anthropologist that Livingstone asked him, with an air of deep puzzlement, « Can you possibly explain, as an anthropologist, how the Greeks, who were such a *civilized* people, could ever have *tolerated* homosexuality ? »

It is hard to imagine any classicist in 1979 suggesting that it is « better to forget » any proposition about the Greeks which is supported by the evidence. There is little doubt that in pedagogy and popularization emphasis on the extent to which our world and the Greek world are linked by community of sensation and experience at the physical level has played an important part in attracting the learner and interesting the general reader, who is commonly repelled or bored by ‘classicism’. Such emphasis, however, carries obvious dangers ; there is little advantage in disclosing that the Greeks, like most of us, picked their teeth, if we do not also disclose that, unlike most of us, they built the Parthenon and invented tragedy<sup>1</sup>. The problem in presenting the Greeks to our own society is always to select in such a way as to achieve that balance between the alien and the familiar which will create the most complete and the most accurate understanding. The expurgators fought a long delaying action, now defeated, on one front ; it is not inconceivable that a new generation of expurgators, animated by the slogan of the sixties, « Make love, not war ! », may one day open hostilities on another front.

<sup>1</sup> I borrow the sentiment, though not the exact wording, from remarks made by Sir Desmond Lee in discussing a draft of the beginners’ Greek course now published (Cambridge 1978) as *Reading Greek*.

## DISCUSSION

*M. Momigliano* : When did the practice of expurgating texts for the purpose of education begin ? The Jesuits have the reputation of having played a central role in Catholic countries. But Jesuitic education developed in a century in which classical scholarship, especially Greek scholarship, enormously enlarged its scope, and difficult texts, like Aristophanes, became more understandable. As Dover himself implies, nineteenth-century English editors and translators seem to have continued a widespread practice of earlier centuries. If there is a difference between England and Germany, it may be due to a greater readiness of German classical scholars to admit relativity and change in values (it is perhaps no chance that just Droysen translated Aristophanes in the way he did).

*M. Dover* : I greatly doubt whether English expurgators in the nineteenth century knew or cared anything about the Jesuits' educational system. They had behind them, however, a long tradition of altering Shakespeare for purposes of production in response to the demands of 'sensibility'.

*M. den Boer* : On n'a pas seulement expurgé les textes plus ou moins scabreux que nous ont laissés les Anciens : on a aussi, notamment aux Pays-Bas, produit des dictionnaires grecs dans lesquels les mots jugés inconvenants, voire les acceptations érotiques ou scatologiques de mots courants, ne figurent pas.

*M. Dover* : That phenomenon, the expurgated dictionary, brings home to me the fact that a proper survey of the history of expurgation in Western Europe would require another year's work. I have focussed on one author and one work of another author, in three countries only. More extensive enquiry would undoubtedly reveal varied types of expurgation.

*M. Bolgar*: The Greek romances provide interesting material on this point. They are positively Victorian in their general morality. There are homosexual lovers in both Xenophon of Ephesus and Achilles Tatius, and in each case one of the lovers is made to die a tragic death. The homosexual who attempts to seduce Daphnis is rigorously condemned. Anthia is put in a brothel in Xenophon but retains her virtue. The same thing happens to the heroine in Apollonius of Tyre, which probably had a Greek original. Daphnis and Chloe do not make love until after they are married. On the other hand, Longus has no hesitation in describing the sexual act or in mentioning rape and homosexuality. This suggests that in the Greek tradition frankness and morality could co-exist.

*M. Dover*: That the Greeks had their own conception of 'decency', in the sexual sense, is clear not only from the implications of such words as *αἰσχρούργια* and *αἰσχρολογία* (see especially Arist. *Pol.* 1336 b), but from the euphemisms and circumlocutions employed in serious literature, where many sexual words frequent in comedy, the iambographers, graffiti and some poems of Theokritos never occur (e.g. *βινεῖν γυναῖκα* vs. *συγγίγνεσθαι γυναικί*). It is noteworthy, too, that Aischines, in his *Speech against Timarchos* (37 f.), hesitates to use such words as *πεπορνευμένος* in front of a jury.

*M. Reverdin*: A partir de quel moment s'est-on insurgé, au nom de la probité intellectuelle et du respect des textes, contre les expurgations moralisantes qu'on leur faisait subir, ce qui les dénaturait ? L'expurgateur est, en fait, un faussaire !

Quand j'étais collégien, à la fin des années vingt, nous lisions Horace dans l'édition Hachette, qui est une édition scolaire. Dans le récit du voyage à Brindes, il est question d'une fille qu'Horace attend longuement, qui ne vient pas ; irrité par son attente, le poète éjacule et souille sa couche. Le passage avait été expurgé ; mais on avait eu soit la candeur, soit l'honnêteté de ne pas modifier la numérotation des vers. Interrogé sur ce que contenait la lacune, le maître de latin, après avoir bredouillé, s'était refusé à le dire. Nous nous

sommes donc procuré une édition intégrale, avec traduction, et je gage qu'aujourd'hui le passage expurgé est le seul, dans tout Horace, dont la plupart de mes camarades ont conservé le souvenir. Or, je m'en souviens fort bien, ce qui nous avait indignés, c'est qu'on se soit permis de mutiler ainsi un texte poétique. Nous considérions cette manipulation comme inavouable, comme intellectuellement et artistiquement indéfendable.

A partir de quand, dans les pays sur lesquels votre enquête a porté, s'est-on insurgé contre l'expurgation des textes ?

*M. Dover* : When I was at school in the 1930's we all regarded expurgation as one of the many foolish things done by grown-ups. It seemed to be part of the natural order that grown-ups should behave like that, so we treated it with amused tolerance. After the war, I suppose, pupils were more inclined to be angry about it.

*M. Bolgar* : There is an anecdote about Byron at Harrow which tells us that they used a collected edition of the Latin poets which had all the expurgated passages printed separately at the back. The result was that the boys read these first of all !

*M. Momigliano* : Also in Italy we have used similar editions !

*M. Burkert* : In praktisch allen europäischen Ländern gab es seit Erfindung des Buchdrucks institutionalisierte, staatliche und/oder kirchliche Zensur. Spielt Rücksicht darauf bei der 'expurgation' eine Rolle ? Freilich, ein Klassiker ist *per definitionem* vorbildlich und kann darum kaum verboten werden. Darum können umgekehrt Klassiker gegen die Zensur ausgespielt werden, um diese zu umgehen oder lächerlich zu machen. Gibt es dergleichen im Umgang mit griechischen Texten ?

*M. Dover* : I would draw a firm distinction between political censorship and censorship on grounds of offence against decency. The latter is of course linked to expurgation.

So far as I know, no one has been prosecuted for publishing in an ancient language words which he would not have been allowed to print in English. It is a different matter with obscene pictures. In Hoppin's *Handbook of Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters* at least one illustration is partly blotted-out, and there is another vase of which Hoppin remarks that it can never be illustrated !

*M. Burkert* : Ein Beispiel von 'expurgation' nicht sexualethisch, sondern theologisch verwerflicher Passagen ist die Tilgung der spöttischen Sätze über das frühe Christentum bei Lukian, *De morte Peregrini*, in einer Reihe der byzantinischen Handschriften.

Welche Rolle aber spielt 'expurgation' beim Text der Bibel selbst ? Im *Alten Testament* gibt es Passagen mit sehr expliziten sexuellen Details — die etwa in frommen Kreisen von der Jugend insgeheim markiert und mit besonderem Interesse studiert wurden.

*M. Dover* : There were indeed attempts to produce a bowdlerized Bible in early nineteenth-century England. Gladstone may not have heard of them, because in the letter which I have quoted he speaks of expurgating the Bible as a purely hypothetical consequence of pursuing the principle of expurgation to a logical conclusion.

It is to be expected that the Byzantines should have tried to suppress passages which were doctrinally *anti-Christian*, and striking, at first sight, that they failed to suppress so much that was morally *un-Christian*. Aristophanes was saved by being to some extent regarded as a vehement satirist and moralist who reprobated sexual deviations and excesses, together with cowardice and corruption, in outspoken terms. Sometimes, of course, he was criticised—for example, by Tzetzes, who strongly disapproved of his treatment of Socrates but at the same time venerated him as an invaluable witness to Attic usage.

*M. Bolgar* : Louis XIV provides us with an example of political censorship directed against a classical writer. He would not have Lucan included among the texts read by his grandson because of

Lucan's republican sentiments. This is censorship at a private level, but it is worth remembering that in general the popularity of Lucan declines sharply as we enter the period of absolute monarchies.

*M. Hurst* : The question I wanted to ask is basically the same question already asked by Professor Burkert about the relation between general censorship of literary works and the expurgation of classical texts. But one remembers, for instance, that the most pornographic parts of Diderot's *Les bijoux indiscrets* are written in Latin in order to avoid censorship, that in 1857 Flaubert faced a trial for *Madame Bovary*—and for parts that are not at all offensive on the level of language—while translations of classical texts were not attacked. Could it be that in certain countries people thought of classics (in the original as well as in translation) as something that was anyway reserved to the happy few, so that it was not necessary to apply any form of censorship to them, not only because they were the classics but because their influence was limited ? In other words, do you feel on the one hand that expurgation could be considered as a symptom of the importance attributed to classics, and, secondly, can you perceive a difference between censorship of contemporary works and that of the translations of classics ?

*M. Dover* : Some translations of classical texts in the nineteenth century were made (sometimes anonymously) for gentlemen who wished to renew, without the fatigue of re-learning the languages, acquaintance with classical works which they had read at school. These translations, literal and inelegant, tend to be less inhibited than those published with a wider public in view, and it is certainly possible that they were 'privileged' in the sense that they escaped a suppression which they might have incurred if they had been original works in the vernacular.

The prosecution of Flaubert and his publisher for the offence against religion and public morals constituted by *Madame Bovary* is a remarkable episode in the history of censorship, because the passages cited by the prosecutor contain no words or expressions which could be regarded as blasphemous or indecent in themselves.

To that extent the case is more akin to expurgation as practised in England than to expurgation in France.

*M. Bolgar* : It is perhaps worth noting that the age of expurgation coincides with the period when classical studies were the standard education of the British upper and middle class, and that when the popularity of the Classics declines, when Greek and Latin become the specialised study of a minority, they lose their exemplary character, and expurgation disappears.

*M. Dover* : I suppose that up to the first World War British upper-class and middle-class society was extraordinarily confident of its own values. It knew what it wanted from the Classics, and it exploited them in order to sustain its values. Now, especially since the Second World War, this self-assurance has given way to self-doubt, humility and guilt ; we do not now 'exploit' the Classics, because we are not agreed on the ends to which the study of Classics is a means.

*M. den Boer* : 1) Is there evidence for the performance of Greek comedies before this century ? If so, how were the problems of propriety solved ?

2) The *Lysistrate* of Wilamowitz has always puzzled me in one respect : this commentary shows complete understanding of the situation of women in the play. He only loses his temper as soon as  $\Delta\iota\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\acute{\eta}$  is brought on. Can this be explained ?

*M. Dover* : I do not know whether Aristophanes was commonly performed in Britain in the nineteenth century, but he has certainly been performed in schools and universities in this century. I have seen some translations made for the purpose, and until recently the translators greatly toned down the indecency. The fact that they also replaced ancient with modern topicalities rendered their omission or replacement of sexual jokes inconspicuous.

Wilamowitz was perhaps repelled, understandably, by the gross 'objectification' of  $\Delta\iota\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\acute{\eta}$ . It seems obvious, too, that he sympa-

thised greatly with *Lysistrata* and resented the frivolous treatment of her serious proposals.

*M<sup>me</sup> Patlagean* : L'attitude byzantine envers Platon et envers le *Banquet* mérite peut-être une remarque dans la perspective que nous avons ouverte. Notre Platon est un Platon byzantin, puisque c'est Byzance qui nous a légué le texte que nous connaissons. La culture grecque classique revêtait en effet aux IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles une exemplarité comparable à celle que vous avez montrée. Or, dans le même temps, l'homosexualité n'est pas occultée, mais condamnée de façon explicite et répétée par toute la tradition juridique et canonique. Cette contradiction n'en est-elle donc une que pour nous ?

*M. Dover* : The Byzantines were not concerned, as nineteenth-century British educators were concerned, to conceal biological facts from the young ; they simply wished that, given the facts, the young should receive good moral instruction.

Although Alkibiades tried to seduce Sokrates, he did, after all, fail, and Sokrates delivered a bit of a sermon at him. To that extent, the story is highly moral (and the reader may well know that Alkibiades came to a bad end).

Moreover, it is possible to read the *Symposium* without realizing exactly what speakers like Pausanias are talking about, even without understanding  $\pi\ddot{\alpha}\nu\ \pi\acute{a}\nu\tau\omega\varsigma\ \chi\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\sigma\vartheta\alpha\iota$ , because the reader can assume that 'anything honourable' or 'anything decent', made explicit by Sokrates in *Euthd.* 282 b, is implied. I have met people who have interpreted the *Symposium* in this way ; some of them would say that they had read it carefully.

*M. Bolgar* : The plays of Hroswitha provide an early (and extreme) example of bowdlerisation. She claims to imitate Terence, but in fact her playlets, which are drawn from saints' lives, bear no resemblance in theme and treatment to Terence. They do mention sexual desire but it is always cursorily treated and the emphasis is on the virgin's virtuous resistance.

