

# Translation intertextualities: A literary-critical comparison of Cecil Day Lewis's and Ida Gerhardt's translations of Vergil's *Georgics* in the light of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's turn to modernity in the translation of the Greek and Roman classics

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A comparative literary-critical study of Cecil Day Lewis's and Ida Gerhardt's translations of Vergil's great and influential didactic poem, the *Georgics*, well illustrates the turn taken in the mid-20th century to modernity, away from earlier archaizing, in the translation of the Greek and Roman literary classics, although the accommodation by each of these two poets to modernity is very different, with Day Lewis coming close to a sweeping 'domestication' of the original Latin in his target language, whereas Gerhardt's Dutch translation shows much more the characteristics of what might be called a 'foreignizing' rendering.

Key terms: Vergil; *Georgics*; translation; Cecil Day Lewis; Ida Gerhardt; archaizing; modernity; domesticating; foreignizing.

Since the Renaissance literary translation has played an immense role in the reception of Greco-Roman culture in the West, and has often posed over the centuries an equally great challenge to the translators of the Greek and Latin originals into the vernacular languages.<sup>1,2</sup> For wherever the translation's goal is not simply to serve a purely practical end, that is, only or mainly to convey

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an expanded version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Netherlandic Studies at Brock University in May 2014.

<sup>2</sup> This study is inspired by George Steiner's magisterial *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975) – still, after forty years since its publication, a key work highlighting the unique and major role played by the practice of translation not only in the transmission and dissemination but also in the creation of culture. The reader will find in Umberto Eco's *Experiences in Translation* (2001) a keen semiotic perspective which draws on the author's own extensive experience as a literary translator. This work introduced me to the terms "foreignizing" and "domesticating" which I have used in this paper.

information and knowledge – still the aim of the practical, everyday activity of translation, whether oral or textual, we are familiar with today – but, rather, to work with the target language and with its literary-creative possibilities in such a way so as to capture some sense of the aesthetic-stylistic qualities of the source text, this poses the supreme challenge to the translator. The major article on translation contained in the recent collection of essays, *The Classical Tradition: Art, Literature, Thought*, co-authored by Michael Silk, Ingo Gildenhard and Rosemary Barrow, demonstrates that past translators, wherever possible and thought necessary, built upon and responded to the work of previous translators. The history of the central role played by translation in the reception in the West of the Greek and Roman literary classics thus provides us with a rich, variegated record of what might be called translation intertextualities. This paper will offer a literary-critical comparison of the 1940s translations by the English poet Cecil Day Lewis (1904-72) and the Dutch classicist-poet Ida Gerhardt (1905-97) of Vergil's poetic masterpiece, the *Georgics*, in order to highlight an admittedly small but still significant chapter in translation history, as we will see a signal change making itself felt in the style and manner of both English and Dutch literary translation of the Greek and Latin classics.

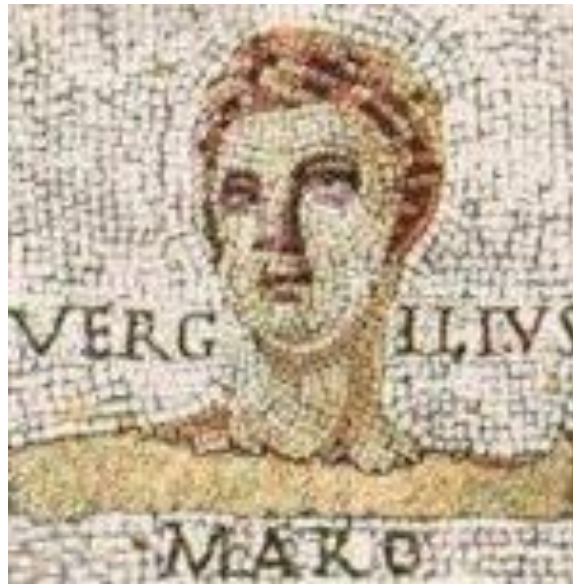


Figure 1. Depiction of Virgil, 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.  
 “Monnus-Mosaic”, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier.  
 Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgil>

In terms of genre, like its Greek model of almost seven centuries earlier, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the *Georgics* is a didactic poem which purports to offer

instruction to farmers on how to carry out their work, that is, when and how to work their fields and crops and how to breed and raise their animals. However, much like its great predecessor, the *Georgics* moves well beyond these didactic parameters, for it is animated by the urgent public and private concerns of Vergil's own time, the age of the final collapse of the Roman Republic and the dawning of the Roman imperial period, and it intimates the profound need for the peoples of Rome and Italy to rediscover their moral, ethical and religious roots in their ancient agricultural heritage. The *Georgics* places its hope that this rebirth is possible in the meteoric rise to power of the young Octavian, later to be the emperor Augustus, and lavishes him with praise as the saviour of Rome. In short, Vergil's poem of 2188 lines, composed slowly and meticulously over a period of nine years (37-29 BCE), is not so much didactic in that it aims at practical utility but rather is inspirational in that it sets out to awaken in its audience and readers a renewed appreciation of the truly good life anchored in the farmer's hallowed, ancient heritage on the land. In this sense, the *Georgics* makes a fundamental point which transcends its immediate Roman historical context, as is well summarized by Janet Lembke in her 2005 verse translation: "An underlying thesis of the *Georgics* is that agriculture is the underpinning of civilization and the existence of civic communities" (Lembke 2005, xviii).

Moreover, the *Georgics* inscribes the ineluctable cycles of life and death and of creation and destruction upon its unfolding panoramic vision of agriculture's civilizing transformation of the human condition. Thus, in book one terrible storms and floods are vividly described as undoing the farmers' toil in the fields, while in book three disease ravages herds and flocks, and indeed nature at large becomes tainted with the plague. The peasant's lot, therefore, is one of *improbis labor* ('relentless toil', *G.* 1.146; Day Lewis translates it as 'unremitting labour', Gerhardt as '*koppig werk en nood*'). An ultimately pessimistic strain predominates in these two books. In contrast, book two, with its focus on viticulture and its descriptions of Bacchic celebration, its well-known *laus Italiae*, and its lengthy finale where praise of the farmer's life and work transitions into homage of a life given over to the philosophical contemplation of nature, radiates optimism. Book four, which deals with bee-keeping, seems to be heading towards a fatalistic pessimism when it begins to describe how the beehive may be devastated by disease and death, but in the mythological second half of this book, where the beekeeper Aristaeus learns, through to the miracle of necrobiosis, how to create for himself a new swarm of bees, a ray of light pierces this sombre vision. The story of Aristaeus frames Vergil's retelling of the myth of Orpheus: how his rescue of his beloved Eurydice from Hades is undone by his anxiety and impatience and how later the inconsolable poet-singer is torn limb from limb by the crazed Thracian women whose amorous advances he has

spurned – a life of tragedy, therefore, but even so, we are told, Orpheus’ loving voice and music can never be completely stilled. Loss, death, love persisting in death, and miraculous regeneration from death are thus brought into balance, albeit a precarious one.

Whether read in the original or in translation, the *Georgics* enjoyed great popularity in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in European literature. This enthusiastic reception is encapsulated in the supreme accolade by John Dryden in the Preface to his verse translation published in 1679: “the most complete, elaborate and finished piece of all Antiquity [...] the *Georgic* [sic] has all the perfection that can be expected in a poem written by the greatest poet in the flower of his Age [...]” (Dryden 1987, 153). In the Dutch Republic, the afterlife, so to speak, of the *Georgics* in later literary echoes and allusions peaked in the seventeenth and in England in the following century (Schrijvers 2004, 23-26; Wilkinson 1982, 46-49). Schrijvers distinguishes three forms taken by this literary legacy: 1. translations; 2. didactic poems on rural subjects inspired by the *Georgics*; 3. descriptive poems of landscape and nature with “purple passages” – i.e. passages heavily ornate with poetic devices and effects – modelled on specific parts of the *Georgics*, e.g. the *laus Italiae* in book two (Schrijvers 21, 2004). Both Schrijvers and Wilkinson make clear that the *Georgics*-inspired literature of the early modern period reflects the interests of the wealthy landowning class, whether rural (as in England) or urban-based (as in the Dutch Republic) and largely elides the perspective of the small farmer, which comes much more to the fore in Vergil; the upper-class ambiance is especially transparent in the Dutch *hofdichten* (poetry celebrating the beauties of country-estates) of the seventeenth century. The canonical Dutch and English translations of the *Georgics* during this period date from the middle and late parts respectively of the seventeenth century. Joost van den Vondel’s prose translation of all of Vergil’s works, excluding the juvenilia (commonly referred to as the *Appendix Vergiliana*), was published in 1646; his verse translation followed in 1660. His combined prose and verse translations, are, in my estimation, a marvel of philological erudition and poetic skill – it is worth remembering Vondel was an autodidact – and they compare favourably with John Dryden’s verse translation of the complete works, which appeared in 1697.

Enthusiasm for the *Georgics* and the uses to which this might be used in literature, especially poetry, waned in the nineteenth century, although, as Wilkinson points out, in Britain nostalgia for a rural past in the wake of the Industrial Revolution and progressive urbanization, coupled with awakening feelings for the environment, could still be nurtured by it (Wilkinson 1982, 49). Thus, in the Preface to her 2002 ultra-modernist translation of the *Georgics*, Olivia Chew cites the words of the Victorian British scholar W. Warde Fowler

which reflect the continuing British fondness for Vergil's poem: "No book of classical antiquity makes such a strong appeal to Englishmen as the *Georgics*" (Chew 2002, xxi). Even so, since the early twentieth century and especially since the Second World War, translations of the *Georgics* have been vastly outnumbered by those of the *Aeneid*, Vergil's great epic on the founding of the Roman nation. Not surprisingly, this shift is especially noticeable in the English-speaking world with its hundreds of millions of potential readers for whom translation became the only portal of access to the treasure-house of ancient Greek and Latin literature.

Well into the last century, archaism was the standard speech register for both Dutch and English translations of the Greek and Roman literary classics. This held true especially for the elevated genres of epic and tragedy, although preferences in this respect varied from translator to translator. A source-text in verse posed a special challenge to the translator if the medium of verse was to be chosen for the target language. Archaism was a standard means of heightening the poetic quality of the translation and thus its aesthetic impact on the listener or reader, and was especially defensible if the language of the original was already archaic in the age in which the work was composed. Thus, the language of the Homeric epics was already archaic in the sixth century BCE when, in all likelihood, the first complete written versions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were produced. Classical Latin literature, too, furnishes examples. Lucretius' great epic-didactic poem, *De Rerum Natura* 'On the Nature of Things' is replete with archaisms which, for this reason, would have struck the poet's contemporaries in the mid-first century BCE as imparting a special gravitas to it. Vergil, too, employs the occasional archaism in both the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* for similar effects.

A distinction is sometimes made between translations which may be said to "domesticate" the original as rendered in the medium in the target language and those which produce the opposite result, that is, to "foreignize" (if this neologism is to be used) (Eco 2001, 22-25; Silk et al. 2014, 174-176). A "domesticating" translation, as Silk et al. put it, works "by accommodating itself to the norms of the translator's language and culture [...]" (Silk et al. 2014, 175); its opposite, as one might expect, continually alerts the reader or listener to the otherness of the language and culture of the source text and its overall effect will be therefore one of strangeness. The best example in English literature of the former is Alexander Pope's famous translation of the *Iliad*, on which the renowned British classical scholar Richard Bentley commented to the author: "A pretty poem but you must not call it Homer" (Silk et al. 2014, 174). On the other hand, the translations of classical Greek prose (Plato) and poetry (especially tragedy) by P.C. Boutens (1870-1943) – who, in my estimation, can lay fair claim

to be considered the most accomplished Dutch translator ever of classical Greek literature – are, in my judgment, “foreignizing”, although, fortunately, only moderately so: at times, especially in their renderings of Greek tragedy, they stretch the creative-linguistic possibilities of the Dutch language to their limit but with magnificent aesthetic impact.<sup>3</sup>

“Archaizing”, it should be emphasized, is not necessarily altogether “foreignizing” in its effect on the reader or listener. Thus, the language, certainly archaic in the context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, of both the authorized King James version of the Bible and the Dutch *Statenbijbel* possesses an authoritative gravitas which, however, is at the same time comfortably familiar to traditionally-minded speakers of English and Dutch who are not so comfortable with new translations where the idiom is contemporary. However, the march towards modern translations of the Bible has proved to be unstoppable, and the same is true of the replacement of archaically coloured translations of the Greek and Roman literary classics by modern renderings since the middle of the last century.

In the Preface to her aforementioned translation, Chew makes reference to a 1928 translation of the *Georgics* into English hexameters by C.W. Brodribb of which she cites the first two lines of Book one:

What giveth us glad crops, what star makes timely the ploughman’s  
Labour, or his that mates, Maecenas, vine to the elmtree;

(Chew 2002, xv)

The archaizing is already patent here: the archaic third-personal singular ending of “giveth”; the idiom of “makes timely”; and even the capitalization of “Labour”. Within a few decades such archaizing had fallen out of usage. This is as true for Dutch as it is for English language translations, and so we see that Day Lewis’s translation of 1940 and Gerhardt’s of 1949 have opted for modernity in their poetic craft, although, as will become clear, Day Lewis’s modernity is quite different from Gerhardt’s.

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<sup>3</sup> My appreciation of Boutens’s achievement is based on my reading of his translation of Aeschylus’ *The Suppliants* in a separate publication and of Sophocles’ *Electra* and *Oedipus the King* and Plato’s *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus* in volume five of his *Verzamelde Werken*. The Dutch of his prose translations had undoubtedly become dated by the standards of the later twentieth century, but it captures the original Greek with great precision and elegance. I don’t think it would have been extremely “foreignizing” in its effect on a cultured Dutch reader of the first half of the last century. Greek tragedy also fares extremely well in his translations: again, the Dutch is dated but it renders the poetry of the original with great precision and power.



Figure 2. Cecil Day Lewis.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil\\_Day-Lewis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Day-Lewis)

By 1940 Day Lewis, who is the father of the well-known actor Daniel Day-Lewis (sic), was already a well-established English poet of a decidedly modernist stamp, who during the 1930s had moved in the circle of the so-called Oxford poets, left-leaning and even communist, which included W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice. In the 1940s the anti-establishment political tenor of his poetry began to fade, and Day Lewis held the position of British poet-laureate from 1968 to 1972, the year of his death.<sup>4</sup>

Ida Gerhardt could not be more different, being an accomplished scholar and teacher of the Greek and Roman classics who obtained in 1942 her doctorate in classical philology at the University of Utrecht. Her dissertation was a verse translation of a large portion of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* accompanied by a meticulous scholarly examination of existing translations in various languages.<sup>5</sup> Gerhardt's poetry, unlike that of her radical contemporaries such as

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<sup>4</sup> I have drawn on the excellent study of Day Lewis's poetry, *Living in Time: The Poetry of C. Day Lewis*, by Albert Gelpi (1998).

<sup>5</sup> This was published in 1942 under the title of *Lucretius: de natuur en haar vormen. boek I, en boek V*. Kampen: Kok.

the *Vijftigers* of the 1950s (and their epigones of the 60s and 70s) was not ultra-experimental and never a podium for social alienation and protest, except, perhaps, for her strongly held conservationist feelings for the traditional rural landscape. It was not until relatively late in her life that her poetry gained the widespread recognition it merited.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 3. Ida Gerhardt, 1940. Collectie Letterkundig Museum.  
Source: [Koninklijke Bibliotheek](#)

The introductory 42 verses of book one of the *Georgics* state the theme and invoke and praise, at great length, the tutelary gods of the countryside and other deities whose protection is essential to the farmer's work, and conclude with the invocation and eulogy of Octavian. The real difference between the modernity of Day Lewis's translation and that of Gerhardt's already becomes clear in their

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<sup>6</sup>Mieke Koenen's 2002 monograph, *Stralend in Gestrengde Samenhang: Ida Gerhardt en de Klassieke Oudheid* on the classical presence in Gerhardt's poetry, including her translation of Vergil's *Georgics*, has been invaluable to my study. Koenen's biography of Gerhardt, *Dwars tegen de Keer: Leven en Werk van Ida Gerhardt* has just (2014) appeared. The "Keer", of course, is the conspicuous "turn" to radical modernism, much driven by anti-establishment animus, taken by Dutch poets in the 1950s.



respective renderings of this passage, and this is already brought out in the first nine lines.

Day Lewis:

What makes the cornfields happy, under what constellation  
 It's best to turn the soil, my friend, and train the vine  
 On the helm; the care of cattle, the management of flocks,  
 The knowledge you need for keeping frugal bees: – all this  
 I'll now begin to relate. You brightest luminaries  
 Of the world, who lead the year's parade across heaven's  
 face:  
 Wine-god and kindly Harvest-goddess, if by your gift  
 Earth has exchanged the acorn for the rich ear of corn  
 And learnt to lace spring water with her discovered wine:

(Day Lewis 1966, 51)

Gerhardt:

Wat rijkdom geeft van graan, bij welke ster de akker,  
 Maecenas, moet gekeerd en om de olm de wijnrank  
 geleid, wat zorg het vee vereist en 't schapenhouden  
 en hoe gekend wil zijn het spaarzaam volk der bijen, –  
 dit wil ik zingen. – Gij, stralende wereldlichten,  
 die langs het firmament 't verschuivend jaar wilt leiden;  
 Liber and milde Ceres, als op aarde uw gave  
 Chaonië's eikel voor de gulle aar verruild heeft  
 en de Acheloüs-drink mengt met de ontdekte druiven;

(Gerhardt 1980, 635)

The Latin text, as edited by R.A.B. Mynors, is as follows:

Quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram  
 vertere, Maecenas, ulmisque adiungere vitis  
 conveniat, quae cura boum, qui cultus habendo  
 sit pecori, apibus quanta experiential parcis,  
 hinc canere incipiam. vos, o clarissima mundi  
 lumina, labentem caelo quae ducitis annum;  
 Liber et alma Ceres, vestro si munere tellus  
 Chaoniam pingui glandem mutavit arista,  
 poculaque inventis Acholoia miscuit uvis;

(Mynors 1972, 29)

First a brief comment on metrics. Both Day Lewis and Ida Gerhardt have opted for a verse line with six beats, i.e. six word-stresses. Since this provides some approximation to the dactylic hexameter (i.e. six-foot line) of the original, it is clearly a superior metrical rendering of the original. Importantly, too, this allows the translation to retain the same line count of each of the four books of the original (for a total of 2188 for the entire poem), something that Dryden, with his pentameter line, (with a total of 3149) is quite unable to do; Vondel, who uses the slightly longer alexandrine line – very popular in 17th century poetry – also well exceeds (with a total of 3048) the line count of the original. However, Day Lewis does not hesitate to depart from the general metrical pattern. The reader will notice that line 6 in Day Lewis is hypermetric, i.e. its final word “face” is set apart in a separate line but must be counted with the preceding line, which then has seven beats. In the introductory 42 verses alone, there are a further six hypermetric lines as well as a half line with three beats. Such irregularities continue throughout the entire text. In contrast, Gerhardt strictly maintains the metrical structure.

The reader will also observe very noticeable lexical differences between the two translations. One will notice that in line 2 Day Lewis omits the name of Maecenas, Vergil’s patron, who is addressed there, and substitutes for it “my friend”. Further on, too, Day Lewis elides proper Greek or Latin names and substitutes explanatory or generic designations for them. Thus where Gerhardt, following the original, writes “Liber” and “Ceres” in line 7, Day Lewis has “Wine-god” and “Harvest-goddess”. The Greek geographical epithets in the following two lines kept by Gerhardt (Chaonia, a region in north-west Greece well-known for its oak forests; Acheloüs, the longest river in Greece, rising in the north-west) are elided by Day Lewis, who simply has “acorns” and “spring water”. These epithets are purely ornamental and as such might be dismissed as superfluous to the poetic impact of these lines, but I suspect that even to the educated Roman reader of Vergil’s time who was proficient in Greek, these words, by virtue of their very Greekness, would have sounded mellifluous and exotic and thus would have carried real poetic effect. Perhaps, even the modern reader or listener without much of a background in the Greek and Roman classics might be able to respond to them as such.

These changes and omissions are intentional on the part of Day Lewis, for it is part and parcel of what we might call his “domesticating” of Vergil’s masterpiece for the benefit of the modern reader or listener. In his Preface to the 1966 Oxford paper edition of his complete translations of Vergil, he states: “However complex his pattern of images, however elliptical his thought, the English poet has tended over the past twenty-five years to a simplicity of language, a habit of putting down words in an order approximating to that of prose” (Day Lewis

1966, v). He goes on to say that this simplicity is especially “suited to the down-to-earth matter and manner of the *Georgics* [...]” (Day Lewis 1966, v). This comes close to prescribing a colloquial or near-colloquial register of language, but it can be argued that such a register stands in danger of missing out on a good deal of the rich poetic texture of the *Georgics*. However, it must be pleaded in favour of Day-Lewis that his translation is eminently suitable for public recitation, just as is his later translation of the *Aeneid* published in 1952; BBC Radio indeed carried readings of lengthy portions of the latter by well-known actors and actresses in 1949 and 1950 (Gelpi 1998, 56).

Day Lewis’s turn towards modernity in his translation of the *Georgics* is clearly followed in the five English-language translations since 1940 I have examined (Smith Palmer Bovie 1956; L.P. Wilkinson 1982; Kristina Chew 2002; Janet Lembke 2005; Kimberly Johnson 2010); four of the translators (Bovie, Chew, Lembke, Johnson) are American. Three (Bovie, Chew, Lembke), in their frequent elimination of proper names obscure to the modern reader, show the same tendency to “domesticating” as Day Lewis, although their versification is more regular. My earlier characterization of Chew’s translation as ultra-modernist is based on the extreme variations in length of her verse lines and on her continual recourse, for the sake of emphasis, to capitalization; both of these stem from her explicitly stated intention in the Preface to employ “free verse” (Chew 2002, xv). The virtue of her translation is undoubtedly its great vigour, which, as it were, leaps into the eye of the reader. Wilkinson and Johnson (whose translation is accompanied by the Latin text) are more conservative lexically, retaining nearly all proper names and, for this reason, providing detailed notes at the back. In this respect, therefore, their translations may be termed somewhat “foreignizing”, but at the same time they certainly succeed in being accomplished and elegant. It is interesting to note that both Wilkinson and Johnson are scholars, Johnson’s field of expertise being Renaissance culture, and the late Wilkinson a well-known Latinist who taught at the University of Cambridge and made important contributions to the scholarship on the *Georgics*.

In her 2002 study of what might be called the classical presence in Gerhardt’s poetry, Mieke Koenen cites Gerhardt’s recollection of how she “fell in love” (“*mijn hart verpand*”) with the *Georgics* from the moment she first laid eyes on it in her fifth year at the *gymnasium* (Koenen 2002, 130). Gerhardt devoted much of the wartime period of 1940-45 to a meticulous preparation of her translation and had produced a first version by 1946, which she carefully revised before the final publication in 1949 (one is reminded here of Vergil’s own nine years of labour on his poem). As Koenen emphasizes, this love was animated by Gerhardt’s “admiration and empathy for farmers, for their capacity

for hard work, simplicity, and closeness with nature” (“*waardering en sympathie voor boeren, hun werkkraft, eenvoud en verbondenheid met de natuur*”) (Koenen 2002, 131) – here, too, one is reminded of Vergil. Gerhardt consulted widely with farmers around Kampen, the city where she was teaching, in order to make sure in certain cases she was using the right agrarian word. Koenen calls attention to another parallel with the Roman poet, who composed much of his poem while Rome was still gripped by civil war and by 29 BCE had emerged from it only a year earlier, just as Gerhardt was to devote much of her wartime years and the years immediately following to her labour of love on her translation (Koenen 2002, 132).

Not surprisingly, following in Koenen’s footsteps, Piet Schrijvers, a distinguished Latinist, professor emeritus of Classics at the University of Amsterdam and the author of a new and highly acclaimed translation of the *Georgics* as well as of other classics of Roman literature, shows, in the Introduction to his translation and, in greater detail, in a 2006 article, a keen appreciation of Gerhardt’s poetic artistry. Thus, Gerhardt evinces a penchant for using “beautiful, exceptional words” (“*fraaie, uitzonderlijke woorden*”), of which a large proportion are of seventeenth century provenance or are taken over from earlier authors, e.g. “*traagzaam*” (‘haltingly slow’, coined in analogy to “*langzaam*”) as used by the Flemish poet Guido Gezelle (Schrijvers 2006, 3). This, one might argue, might be thought of as smacking of the traditionalist poetic archaism discussed earlier, but this is counterbalanced by the sheer rarity and expressiveness of these words – and it worth noting that Vergil, too, in both the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, is not averse to resorting to an occasional archaism. Although he praises Gerhardt as his “great predecessor” (“*grote voorgangster*”) and for her “majestic translation” (“*majestueuze vertaling*”) (Schrijvers 2006, 1, 4), Schrijvers judges that, in her search for *le mot juste* in its precise, technical sense, she does not always let shine through the empathetic or playful aspects of the original – above all, Vergil’s penchant for personification, even humanization, of plants and animals, which reaches its acme in book four with its lovingly pursued and detailed poetic construction of beehives as mini-states ruled by “kings”. Schrijvers speaks, in fact, of Gerhardt’s “to some extent Dutchified” translation (Schrijvers 2006, 14), which somewhat obscures the thoroughly Mediterranean ambiance of the original; I might add that Gerhardt’s rendering of the *Georgics* in the title of her translation as “*Het Boerenbedrijf*” reinforces this impression. My own response is that Schrijvers’s criticisms are somewhat overstated, and I would emphasize that in the basic two elements of the style and manner of his translation – the verse-line of six stresses and staying close to Vergil’s Latin – he is very much following in the footsteps of his “great predecessor,” as Schrijvers himself, of course, would generously recognize.

In comparing Gerhardt's translation to the original Latin and then to Day Lewis's translation, I endorse Gerhardt's generally staying close to the Latin without lapsing into awkward literalness – and thus inevitably into a too-heavy foreignizing. This quality is pronounced already in lines 4 and 5 of book one, where Gerhardt translation of *vos, o clarissima mundi / lumina, labentem caelo quae ducitis annum*, as “*Gij, stralende wereldlichten, / die langs het firmament 't verschuivend jaar wilt leiden*”, renders the Latin with precision. Day Lewis's translation, “*You brightest luminaries / Of the world, who head the year's parade across heaven's / face:*” is certainly satisfying poetically but introduces a “parade” image which is not in Vergil. Both Gerhardt's and Day Lewis's translations have their own strengths, Gerhardt's for its qualities of formality, stateliness and closeness to the Latin, and Day-Lewis's for its near-colloquial flow and suppleness, which, as I observed earlier, makes it ideal for public recitation, whereas Gerhardt's, in my judgment, is more suitable for private reading, ideally by someone with some classical background who will not be completely dependent on the excellent end-notes provided by the author.

It is good, however, to see Day Lewis's and Gerhardt's translations come closer to converging when rendering a passage where the verbal artistry of the Latin is not freighted with mythological and geographic references which are inevitably puzzling to the non-classicist reader or listener. Such is the lengthy section immediately following the introductory 42 verses. Here the farmer is instructed on how to work his fields at the approach of spring. I will cite its first four lines (1.43-46) in both translations.

Day Lewis:

Early Spring, when a cold moisture sweats from the hoar-head  
 Hills and the brittle clods are loosening under a west wind,  
 Is the time for the bull to grunt as he pulls the plough deep-driven  
 And the ploughshare to take a shine, scoured clean in the furrow. (Day Lewis 1966, 52)

Gerhardt:

Vroeg in het voorjaar, als de sneeuw op 't grijs gebergte  
 smelt en bij westenwind de grond weer gaat ontdooien  
 moet de os door de zware bodem trekken, zwoegend,  
 de ploeg, 't gesleten ijzer blinken in the vore. (Gerhardt 1980, 636)

The Latin text, as edited by R.A.B. Mynors, is as follows:

Vere novo, gelidis canis cum montibus umor  
liquitur et Zephyro putris se glaeba resolvit,  
depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro  
ingemere et sulco attritus splendescere vomer.

(Mynors 1972, 30)

The image of sweating as applied to “cold moisture” in Day Lewis’s translation is not in the Latin, but Gerhardt renders the original precisely. On the other hand, in the following line Day Lewis is close with his rendering of “brittle clods are loosening under a west wind”, whereas Gerhardt’s generic translation of *putris glaeba* simply as “grond” is inadequate. (Schrijvers with “*een wind uit het westen de kluiten verkruimelt and los maakt*” is close, but, in my estimation, somewhat too prosaic.) One will also note that the word order in Gerhardt’s lines 1.45-46 is quite unidiomatic but preserves the sequence in Latin of *aratro* (‘plough’) / *ingemere* (literally, ‘groan over’; Gerhardt translates it as “*zwoegend*”, but Day Lewis’s “grunt” and Schrijvers’ “*kreunen*” come closer to the original, which illustrates beautifully Vergil’s penchant for humanizing animals).

Finally, the Latin of line 1.45 has *taurus*, which Day Lewis translates literally as “bull”, but becomes “os” in Gerhardt (and also in Schrijvers). It is, of course, the ox, the castrated male, and, together with the mule, the standard draught animal on or off the Roman farm, which is meant here, and in this respect Gerhardt is absolutely right. However, it is tempting to suspect that Vergil used *taurus* rather than *bos* in order to dramatize – perhaps half-humorously – the animal’s brute strength which is still barely up to the heavy toil exacted from him.

The Day Lewis and the Gerhardt translations each have their own merits. One might say that as poet-translators they have followed different drummers, but each has basically opted for the path of modernity, Day Lewis more conspicuously, but Gerhardt, too, in her “*majestueuze vertaling*”.<sup>7</sup> Both, therefore, well exemplify the signal turn that was taken in the past century in the translation of the poetic classics of Greek and Roman literature.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gerhardt at times is even successful in capturing in Dutch the sound effects, such as onomatopoeia, of the Latin original; see Koenen (2002, 137), who rightly observes that Gerhardt’s rendering is “*vaak mooi en expressief van klank*” (‘often beautiful and expressive in sound’).

<sup>8</sup> There is no indication in the sources available to me that Gerhardt was familiar with Day Lewis’s translation. We can pretty well rule out access on her part to that translation during the war years 1940-45 when she was working hard on her own translation.

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**Intertextualités de la traduction: comparaison critique des traductions des *Géorgiques* de Virgile par Cecil Day Lewis et Ida Gerhardt, à la lumière du tournant moderniste de la traduction des classiques grecs et romains au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle**

Une étude critique comparative des traductions par Cecil Day Lewis et Ida Gerhardt des *Géorgiques*, ce grand poème didactique de Virgile, illustre bien le tournant vers la modernité pris au milieu du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle par la traduction des classiques grecs et romains, abandonnant le style archaisant précédent. Ces deux poètes suivent pourtant des chemins fort différents. Day Lewis, traduisant vers l'anglais, s'approche de près d'une « domestication » radicale du latin original, tandis que la version néerlandaise d'Ida Gerhardt s'efforce plutôt de garder la saveur de l'original.

**Intertextualiteit in vertalingen: Een literair-kritische vergelijking van Cecil Day Lewis' en Ida Gerhardt's vertalingen van de *Georgica* van Vergilius in het licht van het twintigste-eeuwse streven naar moderniteit in de vertaling van Griekse en Romeinse klassieke werken**

Een vergelijkende studie van Cecil Day Lewis' en Ida Gerhardt's vertalingen van Vergilius' belangrijke en invloedrijke leerdicht de *Georgica* illustreert hoe in het midden van de twintigste eeuw een eerdere tendens tot archaïseren bij het vertalen van Griekse en Romeinse klassieke werken plaatsmaakt voor een nieuwe trend naar moderniseren. Elk van beide dichters streeft op eigen wijze naar die moderniteit, waarbij Day Lewis een verreikende 'domesticatie' van het oorspronkelijke Latijn naar de doeltaal toe benadert, terwijl Gerhardt's vertaling meer het karakter vertoont van wat wel 'verbuitenlandsing' genoemd zou kunnen worden.