

Each category hopes to find something different in a translation. For readers in the first category, the freest of translations is acceptable, even desirable — the idiom should be that of the language into which the work is translated. This is the most numerous category of readers.

The student needs the most literal rendering that is possible, and he is helped to grasp the implications of the different syntax and the correct use of unfamiliar words.

The third, a small category of reader, looks for some souvenir of the past, a translation which sounds like a translation. Bad translators like this sort of work — it gives them the warm reassuring feeling that they are not the worst in the world.

The fourth category of reader, who knows well the style and manner of the original, may be either embittered and hypercritical, or really enjoy both the original and the contribution made to it by the translator.

Unfortunately, writers and translators cannot choose their readers. Perhaps this is just as well.

But it would be ungrateful of me not to admit that the years I have devoted to literary translation have given me great pleasure. If I have not had much satisfaction from my readers, I have certainly had a great deal from meeting the writers whose work I have translated. Writers do not usually like each other; any more than young girls seek the company of other young girls. Being a translator in the countries where the authors of the originals live is rather like being a nun in a night club. Nobody fears competition from a foreign translator — the reverse is true. A translator, like a nun, may well be useful in other ambiances. I have more writer friends in South East Europe than I have in the British Isles, where my first prose work sold a million copies (something for which other British writers have never forgiven me).

Anyway, translation becomes a sort of disease, for which translators have not yet found a cure. We say of the art, with Catullus:

*Odi et amo, quare id faciam fortasse requiris,
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*

Let somebody else translate that!

- **Editor's Note:** May we suggest Geoffrey Cooke's *Love & Hate* (Outrigger Special No. 3).

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

by JOOST DAALDER

George Wood was a New Zealander. Or, strictly, he was a Dunedinite. To be even more precise, he was a Morningtonian. His father had built the house, and George had lived there all his life. He died there, too.

When he retired, admittedly, he wanted to go overseas. 'This is the best place to live in,' he used to say, 'but we must see what it's like elsewhere. Of course, I would not want to live in another country. Merely to see it.'

His wife agreed. But when the date of departure came near, she refused to go. Her daughter had three kids, in Mosgiel. She owed it to them to stay; six months abroad would be too long. A compromise would be to go to Australia for a month.

George liked Australia, but not wholly. It was too much like home, he said, yet not sufficiently so. Nevertheless, he had some slides to show when he got home.

After a month, when there was no-one left to show the slides to, George decided it was time to have the house repainted. He asked Mr Kennedy, who had done the job a year before George retired. Unfortunately, Mr Kennedy could not come at once. George remembered that it took Mr Kennedy two months to come last time, but then he had not minded. However, the house needed painting, and one could not read the newspaper all day. In fact, now that he was no longer in business, it did not take him long to read the newspaper.

Several urgent phone calls were necessary before Mr Kennedy got on to the job. It was a real thrill to know that the house had been repainted, though it still looked much the same. Worse still, the job got finished quite quickly once Mr Kennedy was there.

There were compensations, however. Since he no longer had to go to work, George could enjoy his well deserved rest. His wife made the breakfast while he stayed in bed reading the newspaper. Once he had finished doing that, there was the breakfast to look forward to. It was good to spend the time in between thinking about the sheer

pleasure of lying in bed. Then he would put on his dressing gown, go to the toilet, and slowly eat his food. There was no need to hurry; he had all the time in the world. After the meal he went to the lounge, and sat there till eleven o'clock, looking at the view. It did not change much.

At eleven, his wife had a cup of tea ready. She read the newspaper while they were drinking tea. After this, it was time for a nap before lunch. At noon, his wife would wake him, to get ready for it. He enjoyed the wash, and getting dressed. After all, the postman might see him, or the gardener. Mostly, though, it was possible to watch them without being seen.

After lunch, he would have another nap, this time somewhat longer than in the morning. At four, his wife would wake him up with a cup of tea. He would have another wash, and get dressed again. Then he went to the lounge, and sat there till six o'clock, looking at the view if it remained light. The view did not change much. If it got dark before six o'clock, he had another nap, without changing his clothes.

After tea, he would retire to the lounge. Simply to sit down, and enjoy his rest. Occasionally he would go to the toilet. And the evening did not last very long, for at nine o'clock he drank another cup of tea, and after that he went to bed.

After a few months, George began to complain to his wife that he did not feel well. He had become increasingly taciturn, but his interest in his health gave his conversation a new lease of life. 'I do not feel well, dear,' he said one day, quite suddenly, while he was looking at the view after his cup of tea in the morning. The next day, he repeated his words in the afternoon, under the same circumstances. His wife advised him to see a doctor, but George would not hear of it. He felt no pain, he said.

But on the third day, George said at several odd moments that he did not feel well. Before his wife could reply, he added that he felt no pain, and that there was no need to see a doctor.

A fortnight after he had first said it, George kept saying that he did not feel well. His naps would not come so easily to him now, though his wife suggested that he needed rest. He would sometimes omit his morning nap, saying all the time that he did not feel well, and then go to bed, quite

exhausted, in the afternoon. His wife then got time to get on with the housework, but after a week or so George stayed up all day, following her round the house while she tried to do her chores, saying all the time that he did not feel well.

After putting up with this for a month or so, his wife called the doctor. The doctor examined George, and sent him to hospital. After a fortnight or so we saw him again, and I asked him what had been the matter. 'Did you have any pain?' I asked. George shook his head. 'Just not feeling too good,' I said. George nodded.

From then on, George spent almost all his time in bed. His wife came out of the house occasionally, to get the messages. I always asked her how George was. 'Not too well,' she would say. It wasn't that he was feeling any pain, but he said he could not get out of bed, and needed a rest.

Then one morning, while the birds sang because it was spring, George suddenly died. He had been staring at the wall facing him, while he was enjoying his rest before breakfast. His newspaper lay unopened beside him. His wife found him there when he didn't turn up for breakfast, for which he always got up, even at the end, except on that day. After the funeral, I asked her if George had had any pain. She said that he hadn't, but that he had been saying for a long time that he didn't feel too well, and that he needed a rest.

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