

## WATSON KIRKCONNELL'S METHODOLOGY

## OF VERSE TRANSLATION

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Watson Kirkconnell, whose phenomenal linguistic ability became a legend during his lifetime -- he published translations from more than fifty languages -- was born in Port Hope, Ontario, on 16 May 1895, the third of five children born to Thomas Kirkconnell, the headmaster of the local high school, and his wife, the former Bertha Watson. Although he was a frail child whose formal schooling began at age seven, Watson Kirkconnell was a remarkable student who, having entered Queen's University when he was eighteen, graduated with an honours degree in Greek and Latin and the Medal in both subjects.

After three years' army service Kirkconnell began studies at the Toronto Conservatory of Music, but the indifferent health which had prevented his being drafted for overseas service, plus persistent pleurisy, made it plain that he could never become a professional singer, although to the end of his life he maintained an informed love of music of many kinds, all the way from operatic skits to oratorio and grand opera.

In 1921 Kirkconnell became the first Ontario IODE Scholar and went to Lincoln College, Oxford, not to read "Greats" as his classical background would have suggested, but to take a B.Litt in Economics, on the assumption that it would open the way to a career in journalism. The year at Oxford was an important one during which he cycled around the neighbouring villages, steeped himself in the history and tradition of the ancient city, participated in debates at the Union, and completed a worthwhile thesis later published and acclaimed under the title International Aspects of Unemployment.

In September 1922 Kirkconnell began his long career as a university teacher with an appointment as a lecturer in English at Wesley College, Winnipeg, which subsequently became United College, and eventually formed the basis of the University of Winnipeg. The first few years at Wesley College may well hold the key to the later direction and intensity of Kirkconnell's life. In July 1925 his personal and domestic well-being was shattered by the death of his wife, the former Isabel Peel, after less than a year of marriage. She died giving birth to twin boys and in his search for solace from the grief which threatened to overwhelm him, Kirkconnell immersed himself in the elegiac verse of all Europe.

The search for peace became also a formidable academic project as Kirkconnell determined to read the elegies in their original languages, translate them into English verse, and publish them as a tribute to his late wife. In less than two years he had completed the translations which presupposed familiarity with no less than fifty languages and

dialects. This statement sounds like fiction, or at the least understandable exaggeration, but the published evidence is available to convince even the most cynical. No modern reader could be more hesitant than were Messrs. George Allen and Unwin, the publishers of International Aspects of Unemployment, whose reply to Kirkconnell's enquiry as to whether they were interested in publishing the elegies is worth quoting in full:<sup>1</sup>

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of April 3rd [1926] and enclosures. While we shall be very willing to consider the complete MS of your "European Book of Elegy" when ready, we very much doubt whether we shall see our way to make a proposal for its publication.

As you ask for our "candid advice," we will say quite frankly that we think you have undertaken too big a task. We do not believe that there is any living man so intimately acquainted with forty different European languages, past and present, as to be able to translate poems from these languages.

Yours faithfully,

Kirkconnell's response was swift and typical. He sent a selection of his translations to the leading scholars in each field. For example, the Slavonic group was sent to Professor Nevill Forbes of Oxford, while the material from the Romance group was sent to Professor Raymond Weeks of Columbia University. Without exception the comments of the experts were both favourable and commendatory, but even so, the road to publication was still a rough one.

On 23 May 1927 a representative for Curtis Brown Ltd., another British publishing agency, wrote to Kirkconnell to summarize the critical opinion expressed about European Elegies by the literary editor of Dents (a British publisher). The editor's comments read in part as follows:

. . . it is almost impossible to make translated poetry pay its way, even when splendidly reviewed. I am sorry it cannot be done for it is a perfectly amazing one-man feat. The translations are real poetry; not only that, but I can see from the languages I have studied that they are really accurate translations. I hope very much that someone will publish it.<sup>2</sup>

Eventually a publisher was found who was willing to take the risk; this was the Graphic Publishers of Ottawa, a press which prided itself on dealing with "Canadian books of consequence."

In 1928 European Elegies duly appeared. The original intention of printing both the original and the translation of each poem proved not to be feasible, but the volume includes notes on the poets whose work is represented, and a comprehensive essay on the whole exercise of verse translation.

Critical response to the book was positive and Kirkconnell was quickly recognized as a man of outstanding talents, already highly disciplined, and endowed with a prodigious capacity for work. The Montreal Standard on 18 August 1928 began a review of the work with the comment:

**No more remarkable book than Professor Watson Kirkconnell's "European Elegies" (The Graphic Publishers) has ever appeared in Canada.**

An Icelandic review of European Elegies, published in Reykjavik, stated:

**One thing is certain, since Tennyson achieved "In Memoriam," this book is the most glorious wreath that any man has laid at the grave of the beloved dead.<sup>3</sup>**

The Evening Tribune published in Winnipeg on 8 December 1928 reviewed the work and concluded with the following statement:

**The translations themselves succeed in communicating genuine emotional power, and at times achieve a beauty of expression which will probably give them rank as English poetry.<sup>4</sup>**

Among the Kirkconnell Papers, now systematically becoming available to researchers at Acadia University, is a file containing scores of personal letters from dozens of different countries expressing appreciation for the scope and quality of European Elegies. On only one letter of this pentecostal collection did Kirkconnell need to use a dictionary and provide an interlinear translation. Each letter was acknowledged and the date of the acknowledgement carefully recorded. Occasionally Kirkconnell permitted himself a gratuitous comment; he wrote firmly across the top of one communication, "Maddening in its illegibility!"

In view of the profound emotion and incredible industry represented by European Elegies, one would like to be able to conclude the story by saying that the translator's labours were as well rewarded in royalties as literary accolades. However, such was not the case; the Graphic Publishers became bankrupt and a letter from the accountant responsible for winding up the estate acknowledges that Kirkconnell should have received \$744 but, in fact, enclosed a cheque for \$2.05.

By 1933 Kirkconnell had risen to the rank of Professor and had become Head of the Department of Classics. He remarried in 1930 and the next decade saw his ever-increasing mastery of European languages and

their poetic literature. In addition to the formal study of language and literature, he made another highly significant contribution. He dredged from old newspaper files the literary deposits of the waves of post-war European immigrants whose experiences had been recorded in their own languages in a variety of western publications, many of them short-lived. His own self-evaluative comment, made in 1967, may well be justified:

**Perhaps the one thing for which I shall be remembered a century hence will be that singlehanded I discovered, surveyed and recorded in Canada's cultural Registry of Deeds this diverse collectivity of literary achievement, revealing as it does a major factor in the life of the New World.<sup>5</sup>**

From 1940 to 1948 Kirkconnell served as Professor of English and Head of the Department at McMaster University, and from 1948 to 1964 was President of Acadia University. After retirement he continued to write and at the time of his death in 1977 was engaged on a major project with Mlle. Jeannine Bélanger, to translate the Book of Psalms into a diglott verse rendering in English and French.<sup>6</sup> Throughout his long life he had produced a steady stream of verse translations. He had become, without any question, the foremost Canadian scholar at work in this demanding field. It is therefore appropriate that some attempt be made to identify the methodology he employed and to summarize his own published opinions concerning the science and art of verse translation. However, before embarking on this task, it is necessary to consider the difficulty of translation in general and then to describe the fundamental problem which faces anyone who attempts to translate verse.

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There is an Italian proverb "Traduttore traditore" -- "The translator is a traitor" -- which is sufficiently admonitory to deter all except the most scholarly and the most foolhardy from attempting to render sentiments expressed in one language into another. This is not because it is particularly difficult to find a word in one language to match a word in another language (although even at this simple level there are serious hazards) but because languages differ widely in idiom, tradition, imagery and symbol.

These thoughts are being brought home to us because of the irony of a situation in which the very age which may be labelled "the age of communication" is also the same period in which the most potentially destructive conflicts separate one language group from another.

In April 1977, George Steiner, in the course of two BBC lectures on world languages, made the following observation:

**The quarrels among human beings, the bitter nationalist hatreds, seem to be rooted in the fact that men and women simply**

do not understand one another, or do not wish to, or do not have a way to.<sup>7</sup>

Steiner had made a similar point in his first lecture, observing that:

Some of the bitterest, least negotiable conflicts in the world today are those which set language community against language community.<sup>8</sup>

The lecture concluded with this paragraph:

The myth of Babel is a tragic one, because men have felt profoundly handicapped, baffled or threatened by the thousandfold splintering of human tongues. This is the world after Babel. Can anything be done about it? Ought anything to be done about it?<sup>9</sup>

The answer to both questions is "yes" and every day an army of translators attempts to "nullify the curse of Babel" as Douglas Bush once expressed it.<sup>10</sup>

But the task of making a good translation is a complex and exacting one. Steiner's profound work, After Babel, includes a long chapter entitled "The Hermeneutic Motion" in which he identifies and discusses some of the fundamental requirements of translation.<sup>11</sup> His definition of a bad translation is simple enough. It is "one which is inadequate to its source-text"<sup>12</sup> because of haste, ignorance, paraphrasing to avoid difficulties, smoothing to avoid offence, or imperfect knowledge of the receptor language. Conversely the successful translation is one in which the original has gained as much as it has lost,<sup>13</sup> and there is a bond of adequacy between text and text.<sup>14</sup>

In order to throw some light on the methodologies currently being used by the majority of professional translators, it may be helpful to refer briefly to the work of classical experts and more extensively to the labours of biblical scholars.

As regards the classics, a major programme of translations into English from many languages has been developed in the Penguin Classics series, begun by the founder-editor, E. V. Rieu, in 1944. The various volumes usually include as part of the introduction some explanatory comments on the methodology of translation employed in the work itself. For example, Rieu himself in commenting on a previous translation of The Odyssey says of one of the sentences:

That is a tolerably close translation, but quite apart from the fact that the modern reader can scarcely get at the meaning without re-translating the sentence, it cannot fail to suggest to him that Homer must have sounded uncommonly turgid to his original audience.<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, Rieu speaks of his own method of translation in the following terms:

In the very attempt to preserve some semblance of the original effect, I have often found it necessary -- in fact my duty as a translator -- to abandon, or rather to transform, the idiom and syntax of the Greek. Too faithful a rendering defeats its own purpose; and if we put Homer straight into English words, neither meaning nor manner survives.<sup>16</sup>

A more extended statement of a similar approach is found in the introduction to The Oresteian Trilogy translated by Philip Vellacott:

I have tried . . . to concentrate on fullness of meaning, interpretation, and suitability for performance; not attempting to represent either the peculiarities of Greek poetic diction or the highly individual style of Aeschylus, but hoping for a direct, unconditional impact. Nor have I attempted to reproduce any Greek rhythms or metrical patterns. Most of these belong essentially to an inflexional language and change their character when adapted to English.<sup>17</sup>

Biblical translators are among the most skilled and meticulous of those who practise the art. This is not surprising since some part of the Bible is now available to about 97 per cent of the world's peoples in their own language. In this area the shift in methodology which has taken place during the twentieth century is clearly marked. In his introduction to the New Testament in the New English Bible, C. H. Dodd, himself a translator of no mean ability, wrote:

The older translators, on the whole, considered that fidelity to the original demanded that they should reproduce, as far as possible, characteristic features of the language in which it was written, such as the syntactical order of words . . . The present translators were enjoined to replace Greek constructions and idioms by those of contemporary English.

This meant a different theory and practice of translation, and one which laid a heavier burden on the translators. Fidelity in translation was not to mean keeping the general framework of the original intact while replacing Greek words by English words more or less equivalent . . .

We have conceived our task to be that of understanding the original as precisely as we could (using all available aids) and then saying again in our own native idiom what we believed the author to be saying in his.<sup>18</sup>

In writing this, Dodd must have been thinking of the eighteenth and nineteenth century "older" translators, whose reverence for the biblical

text often prompted them to do things they would not have done with non-biblical material. If we examine the principles enunciated by Etienne Dolet in 1540, we find that he admired and advocated a methodology not unlike that described by Dodd. It may well be that Dolet was the first western scholar to formulate a complete theory of translation. His principles are:

1. The translator must understand perfectly the content and intention of the author whom he is translating.
2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of the language from which he is translating and an equally excellent knowledge of the language into which he is translating.
3. The translator should avoid the tendency to translate word for word, for to do so is to destroy the meaning of the original and to ruin the beauty of the expression.
4. The translator should employ the forms of speech in common usage.
5. Through his choice and order of words, the translator should produce a total overall effect with appropriate tone.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously it has long been recognized that, even when the original is a straightforward piece of prose, the task of the translator is not an easy one and requires many more tools than a dictionary and a phrase book. However, if the original is verse, then the challenges are much greater and the pitfalls more dangerous.

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The main difficulty in verse translation is that to translate accurately will not result in a poem, while to reproduce the poetic form of the original will almost certainly not result in a good translation.

In a delightful essay, "The Poetic Nuance," Dudley Fitts recounts his experience in editing a translation of a collection of Latin-American verse. The method employed was "line for line and sometimes word for word" but inevitably the result was not verse and hence posed the question of how far, if at all, the exercise could properly be called verse translation. "In some respects it was, I must admit, a theory of despair." The very items which made the original a poem -- "nuances of diction, of sound, of tone," could not be reflected by the methodology which was being employed.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps this is another way of saying that what characterizes poetic literature is that the work as a whole conveys more than the aggre-

gate meaning of the words employed. This view seems to be shared by Bohuslav Ilek in his chapter entitled "On Translating Images" in J. S. Holmes' book, The Nature of Translation,<sup>21</sup> when he states:

**The language of poetry is a highly complicated sign structure, and the complex structure of a poem enables it to communicate more information than a non-poetic text can provide.**<sup>22</sup>

When Jackson Matthews set out to record his "Third Thoughts on Translating Poetry," he did so in a memorable opening sentence:

**One thing seems clear: to translate a poem whole is to compose another poem. A whole translation will be faithful to the matter and it will approximate the form of the original; and it will have a life of its own, which is the voice of the translator. The difference from original work lies mainly in the restriction of working upon matter that is already composed.**<sup>23</sup>

Verse translation, however difficult, is not impossible. As Fitts comments:

**Yet everyone also knows, paradoxically enough, that there are translations of poetry that do not betray the original, and that some of these may even be improvements upon the original.**<sup>24</sup>

The truth of this statement is illustrated by the formative influence of translations in the story of European poetry. Models created in one country have been translated, transposed, and transferred by poets in another. From Chaucer's version of the Romance of the Rose to Pound's translations from originals as distinct as Anglo-Saxon and Chinese, English poetry has been enriched and English poets have discovered new models through the inspiration of poetry in other languages and its English translations.

So the endeavour must go on if only because Burnshaw's comment is profoundly true that "verse translation has given us almost all we know of the poets of the rest of the world."<sup>25</sup>

With these general thoughts in mind, we may turn to the methodology employed by Watson Kirkconnell who, by 1967, had published almost 4,000 pages of verse translation. He discusses his approach in a number of places but chiefly in the introduction to European Elegies.<sup>26</sup> An extended presentation may be found in chapter 6 of Kirkconnell's autobiography, A Slice of Canada.<sup>27</sup>

The introduction to European Elegies<sup>28</sup> contains a very thoughtful essay on verse translation expressed in non-technical terms. In it Kirkconnell first discusses the nature of an original poem, commenting

that "a poet does not describe objective reality but his experience of it, rational and emotional."<sup>29</sup> He observes that the key features in any poem are "music and imagination -- what we may call the means of incantation and the means of evocation." Incantation is deemed to consist of rhythm and certain auditory devices such as rhyme and vowel schemes; the evocation consists of the symbols supplied by the poet's imagination. Kirkconnell argues that by these two means the poet expresses his experience of reality and through these means communicates that experience to his readers.

All of this poses the crucial question:

**. . . Whether it is possible to take a work of art thus created and so re-express it in another language that neither the music, the meaning, the imagination, nor the emotional communication of experience is impaired in the process. Or to phrase it another way, are there any inherent limitations to verse translation?**<sup>30</sup>

As regards the incantation aspect of a poem, Kirkconnell observes that translation into English is extremely difficult because of "its wretched poverty in rhymes." The syllabic laconicism of the language also means that the average translation will have in it far fewer syllables than the original, resulting either in shorter lines or a considerable amount of artificial extension.

As regards the evocational aspect of the poem, Kirkconnell suggests that the translator is likely to be successful when his experience approximates that of the original poet. He goes on:

**One might therefore suggest that if, by a slight change, the translator can flood the poem with his own emotional experience, giving it a transfusion of his own feeling, he will be more likely to produce verses that at once represent the original and at the same time have life as poetry.**<sup>31</sup>

The translation of Goethe's "Ein Gleiches," quoted later in this article, provides good examples of the "slight changes" by which Kirkconnell infuses the original with his own emotional experience.

Earlier in the book, in the course of the preface, Kirkconnell speaks of his own experience in attempting to translate European elegies. He says:

**In some cases I have found that when I had reincarnated poems in English verse, life beat so feebly in their veins that their only hope of survival lay in a transfusion of my own blood; and I have felt no scruples in granting them this if it could make them live.**<sup>32</sup>

It is interesting to read his own approach to the task of translating:

**My method of translation is comparatively simple. First choosing some poem that had moved me in the original, I keep that original before me, mumbling it aloud and brooding over it until I have saturated my mind with its emotion. Then I endeavour to reproduce its form and spirit in English as accurately as possible, reserving only the conviction that a literal translation is inherently criminal and that any verse rendering which sacrifices beauty to philology is a blasphemous offence in its very existence.<sup>33</sup>**

It should not be assumed that Kirkconnell was prepared to infuse his own emotional experience into a translation at the expense of the original meaning of a poem. In the course of a substantial chapter on "Verse Translation" in his autobiography, A Slice of Canada, he formally parts company with the current style of verse translation as practised by Ezra Pound, recognizing that it produces new poems of considerable merit but so far removed from the original as not to be properly described as translations. He questions Pound's knowledge of foreign languages other than Italian, and, citing a translation made by Pound from Sophocles, observes:

**In such alleged translations, any resemblance to the actual words of the original is purely accidental.<sup>34</sup>**

Kirkconnell quotes with approval the chief aims of verse translation as enunciated in 1790 to the Royal Society of Edinburgh by Alexander Tytler in a paper entitled "Essay on the Principles of Translation." These are not to omit any part of the original; to reproduce the style and manner of the original; to ensure that the translation has all the ease of original poetry.<sup>35</sup>

In fairness to Pound, it must be acknowledged that Kirkconnell's judgment may have been somewhat harsh or perhaps a little hasty. What may have appeared to Kirkconnell as irresponsibility in Pound's methodology is identified by other critics as boldness and insight. For example, Hugh Kenner in his introduction to Ezra Pound: Translations, states:

**Other translators of Anglo-Saxon have been content to take the English language as they found it, or to teutonize from word to word without quite knowing what was happening; only Pound has had both the boldness and resource to make a new form, similar in effect to that of the original, which permanently extends the bounds of English verse. Other poets after him have used these schemes of assonance and alliteration; it was Pound who build them their speech.<sup>36</sup>**

Several reviewers of European Elegies commented that the quality of the translations was such that they might well have been original poems. In closing this article, we shall refer to a few of the elegies; this brief selection may indicate the truth of that claim and also illustrate why Kirkconnell's own emotional experience could be so easily linked to that portrayed in the original poems. The modern Greek elegy, "My Tragic Muse," is one of the most powerful translations:

Alas, your lovely fingers touched  
A tragic lyre:  
To veil your sad lament in verse  
My lines aspire.

There in faint quaverings of fear  
Your low voice grieves,  
Like a night wind through withered flowers  
And fallen leaves;

Until in darkness side by side  
Once more we sleep,  
And whisper to each other still,  
And mutely weep.

A poem in Czech by Josef Kalal and given the title, "Written in a New Cemetery," was quoted by several reviewers as an outstanding rendering:

A little fenced-in field of fine-clipt grass,  
A carven cross as sacred sentinel  
Amid new willows: a new plot, alas,  
Planned all too well.

So is it, and shall be, while year by year  
The round earth sees in soil fresh hollows made  
In season by the farmer's plough, and here  
The sexton's spade.

As an example of an unusual structure, we may quote the translation "A Night in May" from the Russian of Afanasi Fet:

Across the clearing sky the soft clouds go,  
Slow-fading; thus  
The sickle moon reaps their last sheaves of snow  
Diaphanous.

They pass, and from the stars strange powers of spring  
Breathe down to bless  
My heart in this vain earth with whispering  
Of happiness.

But still the shades of time such visions blight:  
 As clouds, alas,  
 Into the vacant vastness of the night  
 We too shall pass.

The translations are grouped according to the seasons, significantly arranged Autumn -- Winter -- Spring -- Summer -- Autumn. If one expects the section "Spring" to contain elements of hope, one is disappointed. The poem entitled "Morning" concludes:

And man takes blindly onward  
 One step more towards the tomb.

A translation from the Finnish seems to promise a measure of hope in both the title -- "Clouds of Silver" -- and in the metre; however, the promise of the early lines remains unfulfilled at the end:

Clouds of silver, clouds of silver  
 Ride and race and soar  
 On beyond the blue horizon  
 And return no more.

Fair they flash and gleam and glitter,  
 Laughing in the light,  
 And behind far golden portals  
 Vanish from the sight.

So bright days of perfect pleasure  
 Pass and disappear,  
 Leaving the cold hail of sorrow  
 To its task austere.

German reviewers seemed to approve of Kirkconnell's rendering of some famous lines by Goethe:

Über allen Gipfeln  
 Ist Ruh.  
 In allen Wipfeln  
 Spürest du  
 Kaum einen Hauch;  
 Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.  
 Waret nur, balde  
 Ruhest du auch.

Kirkconnell's rendering is entitled "Wanderer's Evensong":

Over all peaks slow peace  
 Descends;  
 In every branch the breeze  
 Now ends

Its sighing sweep.  
 The birds in the wildwood are sleeping.  
 Cease, heart, thy weeping!  
 Thou, too, shalt sleep.

This was one of the translations which evoked the admiration of the reviewer writing in the Neu Freie Presse (Vienna), who wrote:

**die Dichtungen lesen sich wie Originale.**

Another well known elegy whose subtle blend of form and content almost defy translation is Verlaine's "Chanson d'automne":

Les sanglots longs  
 Des violons  
 De l'automne  
 Blessent mon coeur  
 D'une langueur  
 Monotone.

Tout suffocant  
 Et blême, quand  
 Sonne l'heure,  
 Je me souviens  
 Des jours anciens  
 Et je pleure.

Et je m'en vais  
 Au vent mauvais  
 Qui m'emporte  
 Deçà, delà,  
 Pareil à la  
 Feuille morte.

Kirkconnell's rendering is entitled "Autumn Dirge" and is as follows:

Autumn begins  
 With violins  
 Of lament  
 Wounding my breast  
 With dull, oppressed  
 Discontent.

Roused by the shocks  
 of stricken clocks  
 From pale sleep,  
 I think upon  
 Sweet nights now gone;  
 And I weep.

And my heart flies  
 Down wailing skies,  
 In my grief  
 Blown here and there  
 As down night air  
 The dead leaf.

The final translation in the volume is entitled "A Man's Last Word to a Woman" and is a translation of a Swedish original by Verner von Heidenstam:

I followed, flushed with hope, thy path of roses  
 In springtime's radiant dawn and showery stress;

The record of our summer love discloses  
 Noontides of passion past all power of guess;

And in the autumn gloom, when the act closes,  
 I give thee thanks, who wert my happiness.

Despite the enormous volume of verse translation published by Watson Kirkconnell and the hundreds of pages left unpublished at his death, it may be argued that nowhere else is the tender brilliance of European Elegies equalled. There are still hopes that the 500-page Hungarian Helicon will be published and specific plans are in hand for making available the English verse translation of the Psalms, but the Elegies are in a class by themselves.

What sets them apart is first the sheer linguistic tour de force, that one man could master so many languages in so short a time. A second factor is the use of so many different verse forms. No two translations follow quite the same pattern. Thirdly, the translations are poems in their own right and might easily convince all but the most erudite reader that the English version is original. Lastly, what really characterizes the translations is an intensity of emotion, an anguished insight, which is not often found in the Kirkconnell corpus, for all its breadth and competence. That "transfusion of my own blood," which Kirkconnell mentioned in the introduction to the Elegies, has been given.

The translator himself seems to sense that his verses may not appeal equally to all, but in time their sentiments will have relevance for all, as is implied by "The Song of Grief," translated from the Ukrainian of Ivan Franko:

My brothers, blame me not because I sing  
 A doleful song;  
 If I aggrieve you with my sorrowing,  
 Forgive the wrong!--

For when your transient joys and happiness  
 Have turned to dust,  
 And sorrows curse your midnights with distress,  
 As sorrows must,

Then, since grief's slavery is sung by me,  
 To seek relief  
 Your lonely lips will whisper wistfully  
 My song of grief.

#### NOTES

1. The original letter is part of the Kirkconnell collection now housed in the Vaughan Library at Acadia University. I acknowledge the generous assistance of the Special Collections staff while preparing this article.
2. The original letter is in the Kirkconnell collection.
3. Quoted in Maud Anderson, "The 'European Elegies' of Watson Kirkconnell," The Manitoba Teacher (May 1930), p. 18.
4. From a Xerox copy found in Kirkconnell's papers.
5. Watson Kirkconnell, A Slice of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp. 76-77.
6. I have obtained permission to publish the English verse translation, left almost complete by Kirkconnell at his death. Kirkconnell and Mlle Bélanger published two illuminating articles on the original diglott project in Meta 15, No. 1 (Mars 1970), pp. 10-25.
7. The full text was published in The Listener on 28 April 1977.
8. The Listener, 21 April 1977.
9. Ibid.
10. In "Milton Three Hundred Years After," in The Undoing of Babel, ed. J. R. C. Perkin (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 17.
11. Steiner, After Babel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 296-413.

12. Ibid., p. 396.
13. Ibid., p. 395.
14. Ibid., p. 395.
15. E. V. Rieu, trans., The Odyssey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946), pp. xvi-xvii.
16. Ibid., p. xvi.
17. Vellacott, trans., The Oresteian Trilogy (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), pp. 36-37.
18. Dodd, "Introduction to the New Testament," in The New English Bible (Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1970), pp. vi-vii.
19. Quoted in Eugene Nida, Toward a Science of Translation (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1964), pp. 15-16.
20. Fitts, "The Poetic Nuance," in On Translation, ed. Reuben A. Brower (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 32ff.
21. Ilek, "On Translating Images," in The Nature of Translation, ed. J. S. Holmes (Bratislava: Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1970).
22. Ibid., p. 135.
23. Matthews, "Third Thoughts on Translating Poetry," in Brower, ed., op. cit., p. 23.
24. Fitts, "The Poetic Nuance," in Brower, ed., op. cit., p. 33.
25. Stanley Burnshaw, The Poem Itself (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. xiii.
26. See also The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko, ed. and trans. C. H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964); The Celestial Cycle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), especially the section entitled "Caedmonian Paradise Lost," 222 p. 20ff; and translator's preface to The Death of King Buda (Cleveland, Ohio: Benjamin Franklin Bibliophile Society, 1936), especially pages xvi and xvii.
27. Kirkconnell, A Slice of Canada, pp. 55-74.
28. Watson Kirkconnell, ed. and trans., European Elegies (Ottawa: The Graphic Publishers), 1928), pp. 13-24.

29. Ibid., p. 15.
30. Ibid., p. 19.
31. Ibid., p. 23.
32. Ibid., p. 10.
33. Ibid., p. 9-10.
34. Kirkconnell, A Slice of Canada, p. 70.
35. Ibid., p. 70.
36. Hugh Kenner, ed., Ezra Pound: Translations (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 9.