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Stendhal. *The Red and the Black. A Chronicle of the Nineteenth Century*. Based on a translation by C.K. Scott Moncrieff. Edited by Ann Jefferson. London: Everyman, 1997.

Jules Verne. *Around the World in Eighty Days*. A new translation with introduction and notes by William Butcher. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. (£4.99 paperback)

Jules Verne. *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*. A new translation with introduction and notes by William Butcher. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Translations into English of the great works of European literature, packaged into a full critical edition, have never before been so abundant. The two series represented here are only a fraction of the offerings invariably of a high standard now available. As we witness the worldwide transformation of departments of English into departments of Literature,

we might reflect that this is a desirable and a just process, duly fostered by the ideals of interdisciplinarity and panculturalism. On the negative side, we might also consider that this phenomenal rise in both the popularity and the commercial viability of the edition-in-translation comes at a price, which is the demise of departments of European languages where such works should be read and studied in the original. What is beyond doubt, however, is that there is now a certain type of reader being targeted who has some skills but lacks others: sophisticated, scholarly, well-read and knowledgeable about foreign literatures this reader most certainly is; he or she is even interested in the study of the manuscripts of these works that he or she may be approaching for the first time; yet, on the other hand, he or she has no knowledge at all, it seems, of the language the work was written in and more worryingly does not appear to think that it is necessary. Now of course, the purist's arguments about literature-in-translation need also to be put in perspective (what language do most of us read Dostoevsky or Confucius in, for example?) What is striking about these translations of Stendhal and Verne, however, is the now unquestioned assumption, as with so many other volumes in the same or similar series, that a full specialist critical apparatus needs to be supplied along with the text. Putting aside any questions about the purpose and the effects of this, the quality of work is in each case admirable.

The texts are accompanied by excellent, up-to-date and informed critical introductions, biographical and bibliographical material, and detailed explanatory notes at the end of the volume which are a mine of information for any scholar and certainly well beyond the basic needs of an undergraduate student. Translations too are excellent. In the case of Stendhal, extensive use has been made of the Scott Moncrieff translation, of which many would say that in any case it could not have been bettered (the fact that its re-use no doubt facilitated rapid production of copy also raises commercial questions, of course). Would that Jules Verne had suffered a similar fate from his translators! As Butcher vigorously points out, Verne has been one of the most mistranslated authors of all time and an accurate rendering of his works is now a vital part of the agenda if (in the eyes of the anglophone literary world at least) his reputation is to be re-established as a credible literary figure. Special credit must go to Butcher for his entirely new translation of *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas* where the inordinately long lists of rare marine life present problems of nightmarish proportions to the translator, not lessened by the fact that Verne appears to have invented some of the terms he uses. There is no doubt that this volume now stands as the only version of *Twenty Thousand Leagues* in English worthy of serious attention and, along with *Around the World in Eighty Days*, it is a sign of the growing interest in Verne as a serious literary author in the anglophone scholarly community. (Serious French writers and theorists such as Barthes, Butor and Macherey had, for

their part, pointed out some decades ago that Verne was a much more profound author than he had hitherto been given credit for.) Quite how far such an interest-in-translation can be taken remains a moot point.

Ann Jefferson's edition of *The Red and the Black* ultimately seems to set a limit, eschewing such issues as manuscript and other variants. There is, perhaps, some small concession to the now rather old-fashioned notion of the 'general reader', and Jefferson's introduction to the novel is a useful and incisive account which would be helpful in any tutorial group. Butcher is more demanding, if more idealistic and possibly self-destructive in his critical approach. We are given details of variants from the manuscripts of the two Verne novels, with full explanations of what has been crossed out or included at a later stage. All excerpts are so well translated into English that the existence of an original begins to seem almost unimportant. It is an heroic attempt to interest the serious anglophone reader in Verne, and a boost for the scholarly credibility of the Oxford series. But such quality of scholarship in translation must also leave a number of lingering questions. Will the interested reader feel that there is any space, after this, to go back to the original and discover something new? Whatever happened to the formerly unquestioned idea that reading the original text was better than working in translation? What kind of distortions might this eventually produce in Anglo-Saxon scholarship? What kind of questions are currently being asked at the large University Presses about the scholarly agenda? And more generally, what future does this portend for the study of European literature at undergraduate level?

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