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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

A New Eighteenth-Century Juvenal Translator: William Popple's Satires VI and X

Stuart Gillespie

William Popple (1700/1–1764), a descendant of Andrew Marvell's sister, was like his grandfather and namesake a government official of the higher echelons and an occasional writer and translator.¹ He first published verse in 1726. Encouraged by Aaron Hill, he wrote two Cibberesque comedies which were performed on the London stage in the mid-1730s. His career as a civil servant had begun in 1723, and in 1737 he transferred to the Board of Trade and Plantations. In 1745 he became Governor of the Bermudas, remaining there until shortly before his death, apart from an extended visit to England in 1751–4. He published a translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* in 1753, and a verse satire called *The Age of Dulness* in 1757. The former appeared under his own name while the latter was improbably ascribed to 'a natural son of the late Mr Pope'.

On his death Popple left behind him a number of unpublished works. They include further verse satires, a miniature epic on the history of the Jews, and a stage adaptation of Petronius' *Ephesian Matron*. The last is in the British Library, but a handsome folio preserved in the Bodleian Library contains the rest. MS Douce 201 is a leather-bound presentation volume in a uniform professional hand, a collection of Popple's poetical works transcribed at some unspecified date. Several of the items are explicitly attributed to him in ornamental title pages to individual works, and at one point, on the title page of *The Age of Dulness*, the date 1756 appears, forming a *terminus a quo* for the

¹ For details of Popple's life and writings further to what can be supplied here see C. R. Cropf, 'William Popple: Dramatist, Critic, and Diplomat', *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, n.s. 2 (1986), 1–17.

copyist's work.¹ Some of the verse satires, which are known through this manuscript to Pope scholars, respond to Warburton and to Pope's satirical dialogues of the 1730s and 1740s. Given Popple's occasional writing habits, the ms probably gathers together works from a couple of decades. Popple's classical translating interests are otherwise known to belong to the 1750s.

Two Juvenalian translations or imitations occupy the rectos of folios 55–119 (Popple's name is given explicitly on the title page of the first). They are from Satires VI and X, among the most familiar of Juvenal's works in the eighteenth century as well as many other periods. The translations are presented with the Latin en face, on the versos. More than this, the scribe has adopted the type of layout best known from printed works such as Pope's *Imitations of Horace*, in which, to achieve horizontal correspondence between Latin and English texts down the length of the page, blanks are left as necessary, including many at mid-line, usually in the left-hand, Latin side. This is to say that like Pope's these are 'expansionist' versions of the Latin. Popple's Satire X requires 586 lines to Juvenal's 366, and his Satire VI an even more disproportionate 1,158 to Juvenal's 661 (for comparison, Dryden's Juvenal uses 561 and 864 respectively).² At some points, in fact, Popple notes that he is inserting three or four linking lines not in the original ('but introductory of what follows' – see the texts below). These are not, however, imitations in the same sense as Pope's Horatian satires are – Roman names and customs remain resolutely Roman, as for example with Juvenal's discussion of the fashion for using Greek vocabulary at Popple's VI, 369ff.

These two superb translations appear to be almost completely unknown to scholarship, though they are mentioned in Popple's *DNB* entry. They are also unknown to later translators, to judge from the lack of verbal similarities (notwithstanding that ms texts could circulate fairly widely in the eighteenth century). Yet they are of a quality to match almost all other eighteenth-century English versions.³

¹ Perhaps, since *The Age of Dulness* was published in 1757, the compilation belongs to the interval between this and 1756, presumably the date of the composition's completion. None of Popple's other published works are contained in the manuscript.

² Or 880 for Juvenal VI, if Dryden's sixteen omitted obscene lines are included. For these see *Poems of John Dryden*, 5 vols (London, 1995–2005), Vol. 4: 1693–1696, edited by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, p. 43 and Pl. 1. Dryden's Juvenal is quoted below from this edition.

³ Popple's more accomplished fellow verse translators/imitators in the eighteenth-century (for either or both of these two satires) are: John Glanvill (part of Satire X, 1725), Henry Fielding (part of VI, 'modernized in burlesque verse', 1743), John Stirling (complete Juvenal, 1760), Edward Burnaby Greene (*The Satires Paraphrastically imitated*,

Schrevelius' Latin Juvenal is the only source obviously used by Popple for his work; perhaps he carried it out with a minimal library in the West Indies.¹

Transcription is mostly straightforward, the manuscript being luxuriously produced and the hand spacious and clear. But water damage, since repaired, to the bottom corner of the folio's leading edge has resulted in the final word or so of the last one or two lines on the English side of the text often being wholly or partly missing or illegible. Happily, these being the rhyme words of heroic couplets, they are almost always reconstructable with near-certainty. My reconstructions appear at regular intervals, silently when involving only a letter or two, but within pointed brackets where it is necessary to supply as much as whole words or syllables. Other editorial adjustments – of the sort that would have been introduced in the course of further preparation for the public eye had the translations been printed in their own time – are noted in a list of emended readings following the respective texts below. These lists include only some specimen cases of numerous purely rhetorical commas which have been supplied or deleted editorially.

There are two or three further departures from diplomatic transcription practices. The scribe over-uses the hyphen to the point of its becoming a nervous tic, for combinations such as 'genial-bed', 'teeming-oak', or 'open-huts'; this punctuation is silently abandoned here. Second, vertical spaces in the English text are ignored (as is the Latin text in toto). The scribe shows fresh verse paragraphs by indentation, and these extra vertical spaces are merely for purposes of horizontal matching to the Latin (on the infrequent occasions where the Latin is longer-winded). A few phrases in Gothic lettering, clearly intended as emphatic, are represented in bold in this transcription. Italics, almost always for names and certain other nouns, are already indicated in the ms by larger lettering (if not wholly consistently or unambiguously).

Some points of interest or potential difficulty are remarked in my footnotes, but not points of interpretation which can be resolved by recourse to editions of Juvenal (Roman proper names, *realia*, etc.). To assist with comparisons, I indicate the equivalent line number every fifty

1763), Gilbert Wakefield (Satire X, 1795), and of course Samuel Johnson in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 1749. Of their productions only Johnson's imitation, one of the greatest poems in the language, is clearly superior as a piece of English verse.

¹ But Popple may have known and used Dryden's Juvenal (see VI, 248 and n.). This is not surprising, since in his time it was the English version with highest literary status.

lines in the Latin text. For Schrevelius' text and notes I have consulted his *Juvenalis, et Avli Persii Flacci Satyrae* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1648). I am very grateful to Susanna Braund and Robert Cummings for suggestions on Popple's Satire VI; to Niall Rudd similarly on Popple's Satire X. Acknowledgement is also made to the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

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