

Patricia Springborg
A Year in the Life
of a Wiko Mausketeer!



A graduate of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, Patricia Springborg completed her doctoral dissertation at Oxford University. It became a book: *The Problem of Human Needs and the Critique of Civilization* (London, 1981). She has written on the ancient Middle East and the classical world, with a book on ancient monarchy, *Royal Persons* (London, 1991) and on perceptions of the Orient from the Greeks to the Renaissance: *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince* (Cambridge, 1992). She has also written articles on political theory, from classical political theory to the modern period, including several on Republicanism and in recent years has been editing the Latin poetry of Thomas Hobbes. She is also producing editions of the writings of the philosopher, theologian, and political theorist, Mary Astell, including *Mary Astell (1668–1731): Political Writings*, a critical edition in the series *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1996); and *Mary Astell's A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), a diplomatic edition with commentary and introduction, in the Pickering and Chatto's Women's Classics series (London, 1997), a second edition of which is to appear with Broadview Press, Peterborough Ontario, in the Fall of 2001. – Address: Department of Government, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.

Reports of the Wissenschaftskolleg were not exaggerated. They had led me to expect great things and I was not disappointed. Like so many Fellows, I consider my election one of the greatest honours, and my year here one of the finest of my life. If there is one thing that stands out about the Kolleg, it is the calibre of the staff, the teamwork, and the unflinching courtesy and generosity of spirit extended to

us, from the *Hausmeister*, to the Kitchen, to the EDV team, the Library, Frau Hund, the Front Office and the Back Office, and of course the Rektor himself! Germans are really good at team-work, I have learned. Just like the marvellous ensemble work in the Opera, in the concert hall and in the theater, so with the Wissenschaftskolleg! Needless to say I spent a huge amount of time in the theatre, in the Opera and in the concert hall testing this theory. And when I was not “testing the boards” at night, so to speak, I was in the little cottage playing the baby grand piano. Lessons for my son and me with Klaus Flashar, a truly inspired pianist, who teaches a brilliant method, were one of my most valuable experiences at the Kolleg. Herr Riedel’s *Hund* listened to us practising very patiently, used to strange Fellows, I suppose. Nor will I forget that on Thursday nights during the winter when we were lonely, Herr Lindenberg kindly included, among his many duties, babysitting our red wine *Klatsch* into the small hours! In sum, I can say that my year at the Wissenschaftskolleg was one long symposium: I learned from the staff, the Fellows, Klaus Flashar and from the enormous cultural vitality of Berlin, a city like no other.

My project for the Wissenschaftskolleg was a study: *Classical Translation and Political Surrogacy: English Renaissance Classical Translations and Imitations as Politically Coded Texts*. It is my ultimate intention to produce a 6-volume series of critical editions with commentary, to be published by Pickering and Chatto, London, and I expect to complete a monograph as well. This is a large project, and I completed very substantially the research for it with the invaluable services of the Wissenschaftskolleg Library and its wonderful librarians, who would get books from Berlin for me sometimes the same day, and from all over Europe within a couple of days. But before I proceed to outline my project, I should also say that I completed many tasks that I had not intended to do.

For instance, I completed a monograph on Mary Astell: *Mary Astell (1666–1731). Early Modern Critic of Liberalism*, currently under consideration for publication jointly with John’s Hopkins and the Woodrow Wilson Center Press. I also saw through the press the second and revised edition of my diplomatic edition of *Mary Astell’s A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), forthcoming in paperback from Broadview Press, Peterborough Ontario, 2001. One of my most demanding tasks was the completion of the commentary and the complete bibliographical apparatus for the translation of Hobbes’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (a Latin poem of 2242 lines and 82 printed pages), which I am preparing as a critical edition jointly with Patricia

Stablein for the Voltaire Foundation, Oxford, and for the new critical edition of Hobbes's Complete Works for the Clarendon Press, Oxford. These large projects, underway for several years and funded by the Australian Research Council initially, are now more or less brought to completion, thanks to the excellent access to classical, patristic, and foreign language sources made available to me through the Kolleg's library and the painstaking searches of its librarians.

Although I hated to be away from Wiko, I was committed to attend four conferences and wrote four papers: 1. "Hobbes and Epicurean Religion" for the proceedings of the conference on Epicureanism and Humanism at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, November 23–25, 2000; 2. "Hobbes on Pluralism and Civil Religion", an invited paper presentation to the Conference on Pluralisme e religione civile, Università del Piemonte Orientale, Vercelli, Italy, May 24–25, 2001; 3. "Republicanism, Freedom from Domination, and the Cambridge Contextual Historians", an invited paper presentation to the International Political Science Association Political Philosophy Conference, London, June 21–24, 2001; and the History of Social and Political Concepts Conference, University of Tampere, Finland, June 27–30, 2001. My paper on Republicanism is a very long paper, parts of which I developed for these two different conferences, and I reworked it and saw it through the very demanding vetting process for *Political Studies*, where it will appear in vol. 49, no. 5 (2001): 851–876.

Now let me describe my project, *Classical Translation and Political Surrogacy*. It has become almost commonplace to define modernity in terms of two mutually dependent phenomena: the rise of print culture and the rise of the nation state (Foucault, 1980; Habermas, 1987; Koselleck, 1985). Print culture, so the theory goes, created from a disaggregated mass a modern reading "public", the basis for civil society (Anderson, 1983). But my question is: how did it do it? And I think I know where to look for an answer. The world's great rare book libraries – the British Library, the Bodleian, the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and the Huntington Library in Los Angeles – house thousands of volumes of unedited early modern texts in print and manuscript form. Their publication in critical editions is indispensable for any systematic study of the origins of modern citizenship. Out of this vast array of material, surprisingly little attention has been given to early modern classical translations, produced in great number and often by the foremost literary figures of the

Renaissance. These translations are my focus. In fact, after the Bible, what rolled off the printing presses of early modern Europe were classical translations and imitations of Greek and Latin texts, formative in transmitting theories of state management and notions of citizenship.

My project is designed to test the now ubiquitous hypothesis of a nexus between nationalism and the rise of vernacular print culture by analyzing a specific universe of canonical texts: translations and imitations of classical Greek and Roman works undertaken by the great English Renaissance humanists of the early modern age: the English translations of Homer by George Chapman and Thomas Hobbes, of Virgil by John Dryden and Alexander Pope, of Ovid by Christopher Marlowe and George Sandys, and of Lucan by Arthur Gorges and Thomas May. By “localizing” texts hitherto associated with “universal” imperial culture, these translations contributed to a political culture in which classical traditions of Greece and Rome were seamlessly melded to the early modern English vernacular. The literary merit of these translations, on which critical analysis has tended to focus, is less my concern than a conceptual analysis of notions of human agency, the scope of political actors to effect change, free will and determinism, the relation between leadership and followership, the virtues of citizenship and prerequisites for leadership, problems of freedom and democracy, premonitions of unrest and civil war, and the problem of political order – the conceptual armory of modern citizenship.

It is my thesis that the great spate of Renaissance classical translations and imitations represent works of political surrogacy in an emergent nationalist discourse. For reasons of censorship in a harsh literary environment, but also because this is how people expected to get their information, certain classical works, for instance, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, were read as politically coded texts. The educational curriculum of Renaissance and early modern public schools designed to educate courtiers, often of humble background, required the thorough knowledge of a closed universe of classical texts. Some of these texts, transmitted from antiquity in a long chain of cultural transmission, were written by imperial flatterers, but others could be construed as politically seditious. It was typical for the fledgling nation states of the European Renaissance, Draconian in their punishment of political or religious unorthodoxy, to close off overt forms of political discourse. But upstart courtiers, ever inventive in their search for instruments by which to ply their trade, found to hand a body of texts

that covered the political spectrum from Greek and Roman classical republicanism to Hellenistic imperialism, of which they were the masters due to the peculiar monopoly on the distribution of knowledge that court politics accorded them. So classical translations and imitations served as vehicles for a political discourse displaced into the aesthetic realm – as poetry, drama, and epic history.

The great epics of Homer, Hesiod, and later Virgil, like the stories of the Old Testament to which, belonging as they do to the great Eastern Mediterranean epic cycle, they bear a family resemblance, were stories about the rise and fall of empires and the founding of small nation states, Chosen People of the Gods. Designed to be read aloud on state occasions, they also told of ancient cosmologies, the creation of the earth, everything above the earth and under the earth, and so provided cosmic justifications for kingship. But as they began to attract a body of competing works, especially those of the Hellenistic and Alexandrian schools, they also opened up spaces for allegorical political critique. The choice of text, whether apologetic or critical, and the undertaking to translate it into English, represented a political statement not without risk in the 16th and 17th centuries, in a political environment where texts were scrutinized for sedition by the Stationer's Register, if not for treason by the Secretary of State. So surrogate political discourse sought relatively innocent vehicles for satire in what was to become a long tradition, imitated by Refusniks under modern repressive regimes. In fact, I partly got the idea for this project from my own GDR experience!

Like the Bible, classical translations could be scissored and pasted to create new works that were pastiches of their coded messages, so that mere mention of a motif, for instance the seduction of Mars by Venus, or the triumphs of Hercules, conjured up a world of discourse. These motifs flew out of the texts themselves and onto the walls and ceilings of villas, public buildings, and palaces, where they were visual reminders of epic events in the founding of nations. An entire repertoire of politically freighted motifs was transferred from Greek and Roman classical texts to the walls of Renaissance town villas and country houses, only to be re-recorded in a series of "painting poems" by poets who addressed their pictorial representations and no longer the texts themselves. Or they found their way into music, masques, and opera for visual representation on the stage. They included Homeric images of the fall of Troy; Virgil's depiction of the foundation of Latium; accounts of storms at sea as metaphors for the Ship of State in the works of Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan; pastoral images of a settled, shired, and cultivated country-

side of shepherds, and sheepfolds safe from the proverbial wolf, from Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*; reminders of corruption and intrigue in the dreaded halls of the siren Circe's house and Calypso's palace in Homer's *Odyssey*; Horace's reflections on the virtues of city and country life; and Martial's epigrams depicting the relation of the city to the countryside in time of war.

Gentlemen and nobles who undertook the Grand Tour further disseminated these images through imitation. So, for instance, the great Italian painter Annibale Carracci decorated the Villa Farnese in Rome with motifs of colonization and tyranny: Hercules the bringer of civilization, who kills the Nemean lion and the multi-headed beast, was shown facing off against the cave-dwelling Cyclops, Polyphemus (see Dempsey, 1995). Images of Hercules, Polyphemus, and the cave were repeatedly played out in the three-dimensional semiotics of grotto construction in Roman imperial and Renaissance gardens. The labors of Hercules represented the pacification of the warrior spirit by the arts of civilization, just as Circe and the land of the Lotus Eaters were idioms for the poisons of priestcraft. These motifs found their way to the walls and grottos of Chatsworth and Bolsover, exhibition houses of the earls of Newcastle and Devonshire, the latter Hobbes's patron, whose children he escorted on the Grand Tour on several occasions. They are important motifs in Hobbes's long-neglected literary works, his country house poem, *De mirabilibus pecci carmen*, his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and his translations of Thucydides and Homer.

My proposal is to produce critical editions with commentary of major English Renaissance works of classical translation or imitation as policy manuals usually overlooked by political theorists and historians because of their literary form. The works chosen have a peculiar unity due to two factors. First, they are works of the client poets and dramatists whom James I gathered around him to fabricate a national identity for Great Britain, newly formed by the Union of England and Scotland. And second, there is abundant manuscript evidence to suggest not only that these poets and political theorists knew one another, but that they belonged to University clubs that met frequently for an exchange of views in the form of after-dinner speeches, poems, and plays. The idiom of this table-talk is the same Neo-Latin and classical discourse of the interlocutors' published works, where Virgilian tropes of the Underworld and the struggle of the Titans functioned as idioms for political opposition and sedition.

Outcomes

Pickering and Chatto, London, have commissioned from me a 6-volume series of critical editions: *Political Writings of the English Renaissance*, comprising translations, critical commentary, notes, and introductions:

Vol. I: George Chapman's *Homer* and Sandy's *Ovid's Metamorphoses English'd*

Vol. II: Thomas May's *Lucan's Pharsalia*

Vols. III and IV: Thomas Hobbes's *Homer (Iliad and Odyssey)*

Vol. V: John Dryden's *Virgil (Aeneid)* and the Thomas Hobbes/William Davenant exchange on Poetics prefacing *Gondibert*

Vol. VI: English Political Coterie Poetry and Table-Talk of the Political Clubs (unpublished British Library manuscripts).

I have substantially completed the collection of materials and the research for this project.