



EUROPATRIDA

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ANCIENT TIMES

Texts in Classical Greek referring to Britain and Ireland are scarce but there are passages in STRABO, DIODORUS and PLUTARCH which show that the Greek world was aware of the existence of the archipelago beyond the north-west of continental Europe. These passages may have their origin in the writings of PYTHEAS OF MASSILIA whose *On the Ocean* (περὶ τοῦ Ὠκεανῶν) has not survived. Pytheas wrote around 320 BCE and is quoted by many other writers (cf. CUNLIFFE 2001). The credit given to Pytheas by these later writers varies; some call him a liar (Polybius and Strabo) but others are more respectful. Strabo in *Geographica* (4.5) gives an outline of his account of Britain, with geographical information and some comments on the anthropology of the inhabitants; he mentions Julius Caesar's incursions to Britain (the decisive moment of contact between Britain and the ancient Mediterranean world), and some surprising comments about the Irish. He also mentions Thule, the most remote place known with some disparaging comments on Pytheas. We are not sure exactly what place Strabo or the other geographers who mention this name are referring to, but it may be Orkney. Greenland and Iceland are other possibilities.

1. STRABO, *Geographica*, 4.5.1-5 (with omissions)

(A. Meineke, Teubner, Leipzig 1877)

1. ἡ δὲ Βρεττανικὴ τρίγωνος μὲν ἐστὶ τῷ σχήματι, παραβέβληται δὲ τὸ μέγιστον αὐτῆς πλευρὸν τῇ Κελτικῇ, τοῦ μήκουσ οὕθ' ὑπερβάλλον οὕτ' ἔλλειπον· ἐστὶ γὰρ ὅσον τετρακισχιλίων καὶ τριακοσίων ἢ τετρακοσίων σταδίων ἐκάτερον, τό τε Κελτικὸν τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐκβολῶν τοῦ Ῥήνου μέχρι πρὸς τὰ βόρεια τῆς Πυρρήνης ἄκρα τὰ κατὰ Ἀκυτανίαν, καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ Καντίου τοῦ καταντικρῶν τῶν ἐκβολῶν τοῦ Ῥήνου, ἑωθινωτάτου σημείου τῆς Βρεττανικῆς, μέχρι πρὸς τὸ ἐσπέριον ἄκρον τῆς νήσου τὸ κατὰ τὴν Ἀκυτανίαν καὶ τὴν Πυρρήνην ἀντικείμενον. (...) 2. τέτταρα δ' ἐστὶ διάγραμμα, οἷς χρῶνται συνήθως ἐπὶ τὴν νῆσον ἐκ τῆς ἠείρου, τὰ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐκβολῶν τῶν ποταμῶν, τοῦ τε Ῥήνου καὶ τοῦ Σηκοάνα καὶ τοῦ Λίγηρος καὶ τοῦ Γαρούνα. τοῖς δ' ἀπὸ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ῥήνον τόπων ἀναγομένοις οὐκ ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἐκβολῶν ὁ πλοῦς ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τῶν ὁμορῶντων τοῖς Μεναπίοις Μορίνων, παρ' οἷς ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ Ἴτιον, ᾧ ἐχρήσατο ναυστάθμῳ Καῖσαρ

ὁ θεός, διαίρων εἰς τὴν νῆσον· νύκτωρ δ' ἀνήχθη, καὶ τῇ ὑστεραία κατῆρε περὶ τετάρτην ὥραν τριακοσίους καὶ εἴκοσι σταδίους τοῦ διάπλου τελέσας· κατέλαβε δ' ἐν ἀρούραις τὸν σίτον. ἔστι δ' ἡ πλείστη τῆς νήσου πεδιάς καὶ κατάδρυμος, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ γεώλοφα τῶν χωρίων ἐστὶ, φέρει δὲ σίτον καὶ βοσκήματα καὶ χρυσὸν καὶ ἄργυρον καὶ σίδηρον· ταῦτά δὴ κομίζεται ἐξ αὐτῆς καὶ δέρματα καὶ ἀνδράποδα καὶ κύνες εὐφυεῖς πρὸς τὰς κυνηγεσίας· Κελτοὶ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πολέμους χρώνται καὶ τούτοις καὶ τοῖς ἐπιχωρίοις· οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες εὐμηκέστεροι τῶν Κελτῶν εἰσι καὶ ἦσσαν ξανθότριχες, χαννότεροι δὲ τοῖς σώμασι· σημεῖον δὲ τοῦ μεγέθους· ἀντίπαιδας γὰρ εἶδομεν ἡμεῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ τῶν ὑψηλοτάτων αὐτόθι ὑπερέχοντας καὶ ἡμιποδίῳ, βλαισοὺς δὲ καὶ τᾶλλα οὐκ εὐγράμμους τῇ συστάσει· τὰ δ' ἔθη τὰ μὲν ὅμοια τοῖς Κελτοῖς τὰ δ' ἀπλούστερα καὶ βαρβαρώτερα, ὥστ' ἐνίους γάλακτος εὐποροῦντας μὴ τυροποιεῖν διὰ τὴν ἀπειρίαν, ἀπείρους δ' εἶναι καὶ κηπείας καὶ ἄλλων γεωργικῶν· δυναστεία δ' εἰσι παρ' αὐτοῖς, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς πολέμους ἀπήναις χρώνται τὸ πλεόν, καθάπερ καὶ τῶν Κελτῶν ἔνιοι· πόλεις δ' αὐτῶν εἰσιν οἱ ὄρυμοι· περιφράξαντες γὰρ δένδρεσι καταβεβλημένοι εὐρυχωρῇ κύκλον ἐνταῦθα καὶ αὐτοὶ καλυβοποιοῦνται καὶ τὰ βοσκήματα κατασταθμεύουσιν οὐ πρὸς πολὺν χρόνον· ἔπομβροι δ' εἰσιν οἱ ἀέρες μᾶλλον ἢ νιφετώδεις· ἐν δὲ ταῖς αἰθρίαις ὀμίχλη κατέχει πολὺν χρόνον, ὥστε δι' ἡμέρας ὅλης ἐπὶ τρεῖς μόνον ἢ τέτταρας ὥρας τὰς περὶ τὴν μεσημβρίαν ὀραῖσθαι τὸν ἥλιον. (...)

3. δις δὲ διέβη Καῖσαρ εἰς τὴν νῆσον ὁ θεός, ἐπανῆλθε δὲ διὰ ταχέων οὐδὲν μέγα διαπραξάμενος οὐδὲ προελθὼν ἐπὶ πολὺ τῆς νήσου, διὰ τε τὰς ἐν τοῖς Κελτοῖς γενομένας στάσεις τῶν τε βαρβάρων καὶ τῶν οἰκείων στρατιωτῶν, καὶ διὰ τὸ πολλὰ τῶν πλοίων ἀπολέσθαι κατὰ τὴν πανσέληνον αὐξησιν λαβουσῶν τῶν ἀμπώτεων καὶ τῶν πλημμυριδίων· δύο μέντοι ἢ τρεῖς νίκας ἐνίκησε τοὺς Βρεττανούς, καίπερ δύο τάγματα μόνον περαιώσας τῆς στρατιάς, καὶ ἀπήγαγεν ὀμρὰ τε καὶ ἀνδράποδα καὶ τῆς ἄλλης λείας πληθος. (...)

4. εἰσι δὲ καὶ ἄλλαι περὶ τὴν Βρεττανικὴν νῆσοι μικραὶ· μεγάλη δ' ἡ Ἰέρνη πρὸς ἄρκτον αὐτῇ παραβεβλημένη, προμήκης μᾶλλον πλάτος ἔχουσα· περὶ ἧς οὐδὲν ἔχομεν λέγειν σαφὲς πλὴν ὅτι ἀγριώτεροι τῶν Βρεττανῶν ὑπάρχουσιν οἱ κατοικοῦντες αὐτήν, ἀνθρωποφάγοι τε ὄντες καὶ πολυφάγοι, τοὺς τε πατέρας τελευτήσαντας κατεσθίειν ἐν καλῷ τιθέμενοι καὶ φανερώς μίσησθαι ταῖς τε ἄλλαις γυναιξὶ καὶ μητράσι καὶ ἀδελφαῖς, καὶ ταῦτα δ' οὕτω λέγομεν ὡς οὐκ ἔχοντες ἀξιοπίστους μάρτυρας· καίτοι τό γε τῆς ἀνθρωποφαγίας καὶ Σκυθικὸν εἶναι λέγεται, καὶ ἐν ἀνάγκαις πολιορκητικαῖς καὶ Κελτοὶ καὶ Ἰβηρες καὶ ἄλλοι πλείους ποιῆσαι τοῦτο λέγονται.

5. περὶ δὲ τῆς Θούλης ἔτι μᾶλλον ἀσαφὴς ἡ ἱστορία διὰ τὸν ἐκτοπισμόν· ταύτην γὰρ τῶν ὀνομαζομένων ἀρκτικωτάτην τιθέασιν· ἃ δ' εἶρηκε Πυθίας περὶ τε ταύτης καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν αὐτῆς τόπων ὅτι μὲν πέπλαστα, φανερόν ἐκ τῶν γνωριζομένων χωρίων· κατέψευσται γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰ πλείστα, ὥσπερ καὶ πρότερον εἴρηται, ὥστε δηλὸς ἐστὶν ἐψευσμένος μᾶλλον περὶ τῶν ἐκτετοπισμένων· πρὸς μέντοι τὰ οὐράνια καὶ τὴν μαθηματικὴν θεωρίαν ἰκανῶς δόξει κεχρήσθαι τοῖς πράγμασι τοῖς τῇ κατεψυγμένῃ ζώνῃ πλησιάζουσιν τὸ τῶν καρπῶν εἶναι τῶν ἡμέρων καὶ ζῶων τῶν μὲν ἀφορίαν παντελῆ τῶν δὲ σπάνιν, κέγχρω δὲ καὶ ἀγρίοις λαχάνοις καὶ καρποῖς καὶ ρίζαις τρέφεσθαι· παρ' οἷς δὲ σῖτος καὶ μέλι γίγνεται, καὶ

τὸ πόμα ἐντεῦθεν ἔχειν· τὸν δὲ σίτον, ἐπειδὴ τοὺς ἡλίους οὐκ ἔχουσι καθαρούς, ἐν οἴκοις μεγάλοις κόπτουσι, συγκομισθέντων δεῦρο τῶν σταχῶν: αἱ γὰρ ἄλως ἄχρηστοι γίνονται διὰ τὸ ἀνήλιον καὶ τοὺς ὄμβρους.

2. DIODORUS SICULUS, *Library of History*, 5.21

(I. Bekker, L. Dindorf, F. Vogel; Teubner, Leipzig 1888-1890)

Diodorus refers to the islands lying opposite Gaul and links them to the expedition of Caesar again; he is particularly interested in the production of tin. He gives an idea of the layout of the geography with some figures of the length of the sides of the triangular shape. Comparable figures are given by Strabo and Pliny the Elder, which suggest that their common source was Pytheas. He sketches some aspects of the life of the inhabitants mentioning their use of chariots and their way of harvesting crops. The production of tin in the part known as Belerion is mentioned with some detail about the methods and the transport to Gaul:

1. ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν Λιβύην ὠκεανοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ νήσων διήλθομεν, μεταβιβάσομεν τὸν λόγον ἐπὶ τὴν Εὐρώπην. κατὰ γὰρ τὴν Γαλατίαν τὴν παρῶκεανίτιν κατ' ἀντικρὺ τῶν Ἐρκυνίων ὀνομαζομένων δρυμῶν “μεγίστους γὰρ ὑπάρχειν παρειλήφαμεν τῶν κατὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην” νήσοι πολλαὶ κατὰ τὸν ὠκεανὸν ὑπάρχουσιν, ὧν ἐστὶ μεγίστη ἡ Πρεττανικὴ καλουμένη.
2. αὕτη δὲ τὸ μὲν παλαιὸν ἀνεπίμικτος ἐγένετο ξενικαῖς δυνάμεσιν· οὔτε γὰρ Διόνυσσον οὔθ' Ἡρακλέα παρειλήφαμεν οὔτε τῶν ἄλλων ἠρώων ἢ δυναστῶν ἐστρατευμένον ἐπ' αὐτήν: καθ' ἡμᾶς δὲ Γάιος Καῖσαρ ὁ διὰ τὰς πράξεις ἐπονομασθεὶς θεὸς πρῶτος τῶν μνημονευομένων ἐχειρώσατο τὴν νῆσον, καὶ τοὺς Πρεττανοὺς καταπολεμήσας ἠνάγκασε τελεῖν ὠρισμένους φόρους. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτων τὰς κατὰ μέρος πράξεις ἐν τοῖς οἰκείοις χρόνοις ἀναγράψομεν, περὶ δὲ τῆς νήσου καὶ τοῦ φυομένου κατ' αὐτὴν καττιτέρου νῦν διέξιμεν.
3. αὕτη γὰρ τῷ σχήματι τρίγωνος οὔσα παραπλησίως τῇ Σικελίᾳ τὰς πλευρὰς οὐκ ἰσοκώλους ἔχει. παρεκτεινούσης δ' αὐτῆς παρὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην λοξῆς, τὸ μὲν ἐλάχιστον ἀπὸ τῆς ἠπείρου διεστηκὸς ἀκρωτήριον, ὃ καλοῦσιν Κάντιον, φασὶν ἀπέχειν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς σταδίους ὡς ἑκατόν, καθ' ὃν τόπον ἡ θάλαττα ποιεῖται τὸν ἔκρουον, τὸ δ' ἕτερον ἀκρωτήριον τὸ καλούμενον Βελέριον ἀπέχειν λέγεται τῆς ἠπείρου πλοῦν ἡμερῶν τεττάρων, τὸ δ' ὑπολειπόμενον ἀνήκειν μὲν ἱστοροῦσιν εἰς τὸ πέλαγος, ὀνομάζεσθαι δ' Ὀρκαν.
4. τῶν δὲ πλευρῶν τὴν μὲν ἐλάχιστην εἶναι σταδίων ἑπτακισχιλίων πεντακοσίων, παρήκουσαν παρὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην, τὴν δὲ δευτέραν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ πορθμοῦ πρὸς τὴν κορυφὴν ἀνήκουσαν σταδίων μυρίων πεντακισχιλίων, τὴν δὲ λοιπὴν σταδίων δισμυρίων, ὥστε τὴν πᾶσαν εἶναι τῆς νήσου περιφορὰν σταδίων τετρακισμυρίων δισχιλίων πεντακοσίων.
5. κατοικεῖν δὲ φασὶ τὴν Πρεττανικὴν αὐτόχθονα γένη καὶ τὸν παλαιὸν βίον ταῖς ἀγωγαῖς διατηροῦντα. ἄρμασι μὲν γὰρ κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους χρῶνται, καθάπερ οἱ παλαιοὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἦρωες ἐν τῷ Τρωικῷ πολέμῳ κεχρησθῆαι παραδέδονται, καὶ τὰς οἰκήσεις εὐτελεῖς ἔχουσιν, ἐκ τῶν καλάμων ἢ ξύλων κατὰ τὸ πλείστον συγκειμένας τὴν τε συναγωγὴν τῶν σιτικῶν καρπῶν

ποιοῦνται τοὺς στάχους αὐτοὺς ἀποτέμνοντες καὶ θησαυρίζοντες εἰς τὰς καταστέγους οἰκήσεις· ἐκ δὲ τούτων τοὺς παλαιοὺς στάχους καθ' ἡμέραν τίλλειν, καὶ κατεργαζομένους ἔχειν τὴν τροφήν.

6. τοῖς δ' ἤθεσιν ἀπλοὺς εἶναι καὶ πολὺ κεχωρισμένους τῆς τῶν νῦν ἀνθρώπων ἀγχινοίας καὶ πονηρίας. τὰς τε διαίτας εὐτελεῖς ἔχειν, καὶ τῆς ἐκ τοῦ πλούτου γεννωμένης τρυφῆς πολὺ διαλλάττοντας. εἶναι δὲ καὶ πολυάνθρωπον τὴν νῆσον, καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀέρος ἔχειν διάθεσιν παντελῶς κατεψυγμένην, ὡς ἂν ὑπ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἄρκτον κειμένην. βασιλεῖς δὲ καὶ δυνάστας πολλοὺς ἔχειν, καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους κατὰ τὸ πλεῖστον εἰρηνικῶς διακειῖσθαι.

3. DIODORUS SICULUS, *LIBRARY OF HISTORY*, 5.22

(I. Bekker, L. Dindorf, F. Vogel; Teubner, Leipzig 1888-1890)

1. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τῶν κατ' αὐτὴν νομίμων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ιδιωμάτων τὰ κατὰ μέρος ἀναγράψομεν ὅταν ἐπὶ τὴν Καίσαρος γενομένην στρατείαν εἰς Πρεττανίαν παραγενηθῶμεν, νῦν δὲ περὶ τοῦ κατ' αὐτὴν φυομένου καττίτερου διέξιμεν. τῆς γὰρ Πρεττανικῆς κατὰ τὸ ἀκρωτήριον τὸ καλούμενον Βελέριον οἱ κατοικοῦντες φιλόξενοί τε διαφερόντως εἰσὶ καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν ξένων ἐμπόρων ἐπιμιξίαν ἐξημερωμένοι τὰς ἀγωγὰς. οὗτοι τὸν καττίτερον κατασκευάζουσι φιλοτέχνως ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν φέρουσαν αὐτὸν γῆν.

2. αὕτη δὲ πετρώδης οὖσα διαφυὰς ἔχει γεώδεις, ἐν αἷς τὸν πόρον κατεργαζόμενοι καὶ τήξαντες καθαίρουσιν. ἀποτυπῶντες δ' εἰς ἀστραγάλων ῥυθμοὺς κομίζουσιν εἰς τινα νῆσον προκειμένην μὲν τῆς Πρεττανικῆς, ὀνομαζομένην δὲ Ἴκτιν· κατὰ γὰρ τὰς ἀμπώτεις ἀναξηραίνουμένου τοῦ μεταξὺ τόπου ταῖς ἀμάξαις εἰς ταύτην κομίζουσι δαψιλῆ τὸν καττίτερον.

3. ἴδιον δὲ τι συμβαίνει περὶ τὰς πλησίον νήσους τὰς μεταξὺ κειμένας τῆς τε Εὐρώπης καὶ τῆς Πρεττανικῆς· κατὰ μὲν γὰρ τὰς πλημυρίδας τοῦ μεταξὺ πόρου πληρουμένου νῆσοι φαίνονται, κατὰ δὲ τὰς ἀμπώτεις ἀπορρεούσης τῆς θαλάττης καὶ πολὺν τόπον ἀναξηραίνουσης θεωροῦνται χερρόνησοι.

4. ἐντεῦθεν δ' οἱ ἔμποροι παρὰ τῶν ἐγχωρίων ὠνοῦνται καὶ διακομίζουσιν εἰς τὴν Γαλατίαν· τὸ δὲ τελευταῖον πεζῆ διὰ τῆς Γαλατίας πορευθέντες ἡμέρας ὡς τριάκοντα κατάγουσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ἵππων τὰ φορτία πρὸς τὴν ἐκβολὴν τοῦ Ῥοδανοῦ ποταμοῦ.

4. PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF CAESAR*, 23

(B. Perrin, MA. Harvard U.P., Cambridge; Heinemann, London 1919)

Plutarch, once widely read in Britain (*cf.* GOLDHILL 2002), confirms that the most significant thing about Britain for the Greek-speaking world was Julius Caesar's invasion. Apart from that he finds little of interest:

ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς Βρεττανοὺς στρατεία τὴν μὲν τόλμαν εἶχεν ὀνομαστὴν πρῶτος γὰρ εἰς τὸν ἐσπέριον Ὠκεανὸν ἐπέβη στόλῳ, καὶ διὰ τῆς Ἀτλαντικῆς θαλάττης στρατὸν ἐπὶ πόλεμον κομίζων ἔπλευσε· καὶ νῆσον ἀπιστουμένην ὑπὸ μεγέθους

καὶ πολλὴν ἔριν παμπόλλοις συγγραφεῦσι παρασχούσαν, ὡς ὄνομα καὶ λόγος οὐ γενομένης οὐδὲ οὔσης πέπλασται, κατασχεῖν ἐπιθέμενος προήγαγεν ἔξω τῆς οἰκουμένης τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν. δις δὲ διαπλεύσας εἰς τὴν νῆσον ἐκ τῆς ἀντιπέρας Γαλατίας, καὶ μάχαις πολλαῖς κακώσας τοὺς πολεμίους μᾶλλον ἢ τοὺς ἰδίους ὠφελήσας, οὐδὲν γὰρ ὅ τι καὶ λαβεῖν ἦν ἄξιον ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων κακοβίων καὶ πενήτων, οὐχ οἷον ἐβούλετο τῷ πολέμῳ τέλος ἐπέθηκεν, ἀλλ' ὀμήρους λαβῶν παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ταξάμενος φόρους ἀπῆρεν ἐκ τῆς νήσου.

After a long period of neglect, a revival of Greek learning in England came with ERASMUS and the Reformation. Erasmus' first visit was in 1499 to learn Greek at Oxford. Lectures on Greek were given at Oxford by WILLIAM GROCYN, who began to learn Greek in England before travelling to Italy to continue his studies. This was a period of the flourishing of Greek with such figures as JOHN COLET and THOMAS LINACRE active in the field as well as Grocyn, after whom the present post of Lecturer in Greek Language at Oxford University is named. However, in the atmosphere of the Reformation learning Greek could also be dangerous and regarded as heretical (cf. GOLDHILL 2002; ADAMS 2015); even the way one pronounced Greek could be seen as a sign of subversion. So Greek learning virtually disappeared again from 1530 until the religious settlement of 1559. Queen Elizabeth I, an accomplished Greek student herself, was presented with a volume at St. Paul's School in 1573 by the headmaster William Malim containing verses in Greek.

5. PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF ANTONY* 26

(B. Perrin, MA. Harvard U.P., Cambridge; Heinemann, London 1919)

A little later in about 1606 we can see the influence of Greek on the writing of WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, he relies on Plutarch as his source, but by way of the translation into English by Thomas North from the translation of Plutarch's Greek into French by Jacques Amyot (1579). The famous passage where Enobarbus describes Cleopatra's arrival by boat at her first meeting with Antony (2.2.201f) begins:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were lovesick with them.

This is the original passage of Plutarch in his *Life of Antony*:

πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ παρὰ τῶν φίλων δεχομένη γράμματα καλούντων, οὕτω κατεφρόνησε καὶ κατεγέλασε τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ὥστε πλεῖν ἀνὰ τὸν Κύδνον ποταμὸν ἐν πορθμείῳ χρυσοπρύμνῳ, τῶν μὲν ἰστίων ἀλουργῶν

ἐκπεπετασμένων, τῆς δὲ εἰρεσίας ἀργυραῖς κώπαις ἀναφερομένης πρὸς αὐλὸν ἅμα σύριγξι καὶ κιθάραις συνηρμοσμένον. αὐτὴ δὲ κατέκειτο μὲν ὑπὸ σκιάδι χρυσοπάστῳ κεκοσμημένη γραφικῶς ὡσπερ Ἀφροδίτη, παῖδες δὲ τοῖς γραφικοῖς Ἔρωσιν εἰκασμένοι παρ' ἐκάτερον ἐστῶτες ἐρρίπιζον. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ θεραπαινίδες αἱ καλλιστεύουσαι Νηρηϊδῶν ἔχουσαι καὶ Χαρίτων στολάς, αἱ μὲν πρὸς οἴαξιν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς κάλοις ἦσαν. ὄδμαί δὲ θαυμασταὶ τὰς ὄχθας ἀπὸ θυμιαμάτων πολλῶν κατεῖχον. τῶν δὲ ἀνθρώπων οἱ μὲν εὐθὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ παρωμάρτου ἐκατέρωθεν, οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως κατέβαινον ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν. ἐκχεόμενου δὲ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν ὄχλου τέλος αὐτὸς ὁ Ἀντώνιος ἐπὶ βήματος καθεζόμενος ἀπελείφθη μόνος. καὶ τις λόγος ἐχώρει διὰ πάντων ὡς ἡ Ἀφροδίτη κωμάζοι παρὰ τὸν Διόνυσον ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ τῆς Ἀσίας.

ἔπεμψε μὲν οὖν καλῶν αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον· ἡ δὲ μᾶλλον ἐκείνον ἤξιου πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἤκειν. εὐθὺς οὖν τινὰ βουλόμενος εὐκολίαν ἐπιδείκνυσθαι καὶ φιλοφροσύνην ὑπήκουσε καὶ ἤλθεν. ἐντυχῶν δὲ παρασκευῇ λόγου κρείττονι μάλιστα τῶν φώτων τὸ πλήθος ἐξεπλάγη. τοσαῦτα γὰρ λέγεται καθίεσθαι καὶ ἀναφαίνεσθαι πανταχόθεν ἅμα, καὶ τοιαύταις πρὸς ἄλληλα κλίσεσι καὶ θέσεσι διακεκοσμημένα καὶ συντεταγμένα πλαισιῶν καὶ περιφερῶν τρόπῳ, ὥστε τῶν ἐν ὀλίγοις ἀξιοθεάτων καὶ καλῶν ἐκείνην γενέσθαι τὴν ὄψιν.

The transmission of the classical world and its re-imagination in a new work does not always have to be through direct contact with texts in the original Greek.

THE RENAISSANCE

6. JOHN MILTON, *Poetical Works*, Psalm 114

(Beeching, Oxford U.P., London 1928)

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674), the poet of *Paradise Lost*, knew many languages, ancient and modern, including Hebrew. He later became Secretary for Foreign Tongues in 1649 for the Commonwealth, dealing with communications in Latin with other countries. When his old tutor from St. Paul's sent him some verses in 1634, he responded with this translation of Psalm 114:

Ἰσραὴλ ὅτε παῖδες, ὄτ' ἀγλαὰ φύλ' Ἰακωβου
 Αἰγύπτιον λίπε δήμον, ἀπεχθέα, βαρβαρόφωνον,
 Δὴ τότε μοῦνον ἔην ὄσιον γένος υἱὸς Ἰουδα.
 Ἐν δὲ θεὸς λαοῖσι μέγα κρείων βασίλευεν.
 Εἶδε, καὶ ἐντροπάδην φύγαδ' ἐρρώησε θάλασσα
 Κύματι εἰλυμένη ροθίῳ, ὄδ' ἄρ' ἐστυφελίχθης
 Ἴρὸς Ἰορδάνη ποτὶ ἀργυροειδέα πηγὴν.
 Ἐκ δ' ὄρεα σκαρθμοῖσιν ἀπειρέσια κλονέοντο,

Ὡς κριοὶ σφριγῶντες ἐϋτραφερῶ ἐν ἄλωῃ;
 Βαιότεραι δ' ἅμα πάσαι ἀνασκίρτησαν ἐρίπναι,
 Οἷα παραὶ σύριγγι φίλη ὑπὸ μητέρι ἄρνες,
 Τίπτε σύγ' αἰνὰ θάλασσα πέλωρ φύγαδ' ἐρρώησας;
 Κύματι εἰλυμένη ροθίῳ; τι δ' ἄρ' ἐστυφελίχθης
 Ἴρὸς Ἰορδάνη ποτὶ ἀγυροειδέα πηγὴν;
 Τίπτ' ὄρεα σκαρθμοῖσιν ἀπειρέσια κλονέεσθε
 Ὡς κριοὶ σφριγῶντες ἐϋτραφερῶ ἐν ἄλωῃ;
 Βαιότεραι τί δ' ἄρ' ὕμμες ἀνασκίρτησατ' ἐρίπναι,
 Οἷα παραὶ σύριγγι φίλη ὑπὸ μητέρι ἄρνες,
 Σείεο γαῖα τρείουσα θεὸν μεγάλ' ἐκτυπέοντα
 Γαῖα θεὸν τρείουσ' ὕπατον σέβας Ἰσσακίδαο
 Ὅς τε καὶ ἐκ σπιλάδων ποταμοὺς χέε μορμύροντας,
 Κρήνηντ' ἀέναον πέτρης ἀπὸ δακρυοέσεως.

In his accompanying letter Milton writes: “*Since I left your school, this is the first and only thing I have composed in Greek –occupied, as you know, more willingly in Latin and English matters. For whoever spends study and labor in this age on Greek writing runs a risk that he sings for the most part to the deaf ...*” (Milton to Alexander Gill, 4 December 1634; cf. SHAWCROSS 1970). Greek continues to be a rare accomplishment of English speakers, and it is often in the realm of translation as a school exercise known as “verses” that it appears in English culture.

THE 19th CENTURY

7. RICHARD SHILLETTO *Greek and Latin Compositions*, p. 22-23

(Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1901)

Composition (that is translation into Latin and Greek) was an important part of the language training that boys received at schools which advanced beyond the basics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although it was largely used for consolidating grammatical knowledge by less imaginative teachers, it could also encourage creativity and expression in the pupils, particularly in the translation of English poetry into Greek (and Latin) verse. Examples of this practice for teaching use by RICHARD SHILLETTO, fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, were collected by his sons and published in 1901. Here is his version of Cleopatra’s final speech from Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (5.2. 274-292) which begins:

Give me my robe. Put on my crown. I have
 Immortal longings in me. Now no more

The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.

Δός μοι πέπλωμα κρατί τ' ἀμφίθεσ στέφος
ἀθάνατος ἀρτιως με προσσαίναι πόθος,
ἀλλ' ἀμπέλου γάρ οὐποτ' ἄν βρέχοιτ' ἔτι
γάνει τὰ χεῖλη τὰμὰ τῆς Αἰγυπτίας.
Ἴρα, σὺ δ' ἐγκόνησον. οὐχ ἔδρας ἀκμή.
κλύω γὰρ αὐδήν, ὡς ἔοικ', Ἄντονιου,
ἰδοὺ δ' ἀνέστη τᾶργα τᾶμ' ἐπαινέσων.
ἢ οὐ κλύετ' ἐπεγγελῶντα Καίσαρος τύχη,
οἶαν θεοὶ φιλοῦσι δωρεῖσθαι βροτοῖς
πρόφασιν καλὴν δὴ τοῦ μεθύστερον κότου;
ἦκω πρὸς ἄνδρα τὸν ἐμόν. εἰ γὰρ εὐλόγως
ἐπώνυμοι καλοῖμεθ' ἀνδρείας χάριν.
ἀλλ' αἰθέρος γὰρ κάμπεχει πυρὸς φύσις
τὰ δ' ἀλλ' ἀφῆκα τη κακίονι ζῶη.
ἀλλ' ἢ πέππακται ταῦτα; δεῦρο χειλέων
θάλπος μολόντε λωτίσασθον ὕστατον.
χαίροις ἄν, Ἴρα, καὶ σὺ, Χαρμία φίλη.
πίτνεις; τρέφω γὰρ κάπὶ χειλέων ὄφιν;
εἰ δ' ἀσφαδάστως ὦδ' ἀπήλλαξαι φύσεως
ὡς δῆγμ' ἔραστοῦ καιρία πληγὴ μόρου,
λυπρὸν μὲν ἄλγος ἀλλ' ὄμως ποθούμενον.
μῶν ἡσυχάζεις; ὦδ' ἰοῦσ' ἀπαξιότς
γένος τὸ χαίρειν μὴ προσεννέπειν βροτῶν.

THE MODERN ERA

This familiarity with Greek verse rhythms inspired many English poets of the nineteenth century including SHELLEY, BYRON, SWINBURNE and others. The rise of this Victorian Hellenism indicates a moment at which Greek grew in status and even began to rival Latin in importance in school curriculums (*cf.* ADAMS 2015). Homer was read and frequently translated, and Plato formed the basis of an advanced education in politics and philosophy. Greek even finds its way into popular culture, an example of which is the verse of W. S. GILBERT, known for his light operas, set to the music of ARTHUR SULLIVAN. When Gilbert lists the things a “modern major general” must know in *The Pirates of Penzance* (1880) he has him sing:

I can tell undoubted Raphaels from Gerard Dows and Zoffanies
And I know the croaking chorus from The Frogs of Aristophanes.

8. W.S. GILBERT AND A. SULLIVAN, *The Pirates of Penzance*, Act 1

βρεκεκεκὲξ κοῶξ κοῶξ may have been one of the few phrases of classical Greek that was familiar to a wider audience at this time. Around this time, the poet A. E. HOUSMAN composed his *Fragment of a Greek Tragedy* (1901) to show up the sheer oddness of Greek tragic diction and to parody the way it was frequently translated. It begins:

CHORUS: O suitably-attired-in-leather-boots
 Head of a traveller, wherefore seeking whom
 Whence by what way how purposed art thou come
 To this well-nightingaled vicinity?

This verse has always been popular with Hellenists struggling to put their Greek unseen translations into English.

Competence in Greek language in Britain may always have been a skill limited to a few devotees, who were educated in expensive private schools, and may be dismissed as an elitist practice. Nonetheless such competence requires considerable application not only on the part of the composer but also of the reader and goes way beyond the requirements of examinations. While translation or composition into Greek could be seen to have an educational purpose in consolidating grammatical knowledge and metrical facility, actual free composition into Greek is an even rarer phenomenon, perhaps composed for the retirement of a professor of Greek or some such event. There has been a tradition in England of composing an ode for the Olympic games from 1896 at the first modern games, and this continued for the celebrations of the Olympic games in London in 2012. The then Mayor of London (the πρύτανης βαρὺς Boris Johnson) commissioned a Greek ode for this occasion and Armand D'Angour obliged with this ode in Alcaic metre with Pindaric elements. Incorporated into the Greek are puns on the names of well-known athletes (Bolt, Farah and others).

ἴδεσθε καινὸν πῦρ τόδ' Ὀλυμπικόν,
 ὃ γ' ἐξέλαμψε πρόσθε καθ' Ἑλλάδα.
 ἀλλ' ἡδέως δέχεσθε τᾶθλα
 Λονδινίου ποταμοῦ παρ' ὄχθας.

ὕμνεϊτε δ' αἶγλην ἀντιπάλων σοφῶν,
 στρατὸς γὰρ ἦλθεν ἐκ περάτων χθονός·
 καὶ χρὴ μεγίσταις ᾠδ' αἰοιδόν
 ἀμφ' ἀρεταῖσι καθ' ἄρμ' ἐλαύνειν.

πλήθος θεατῶν μυρίον ὄψεται
 ὄρμην τρεχόντων καὶ λιπαρὰν χάριν,
 σπουδὴν τ' ἐρεσσόντων ἑταίρων
 ἀκροβατῶν τε δοκοῦς πατούντων.

θεάσεται δὲ χάρματι τοξότην
τείνοντα νευράν, καὶ ποδὶ σωφρόνως
τὸν ἰππότην στρέφοντα πῶλον
ἀστεροπῆς τε σέλας θεοῦσης.

πρέψουσι δ' αὐλοὶ καὶ τύπανον βρόμφ
τιμῆς φλεγούσης πολλὰ καθ' ἡμέραν·
ὄχλος δ' αὔσει καλλίνικε
χρῦσε' ἄεθλ' ἐσιδῶν φέροντας.

δεῦτ' αὐτε γῆν ἐς τήνδε περὶρρυτον·
ἄρχων γὰρ ἄγχι καὶ πρύτανις βαρῦς,
νίκη δ' ἀρίστοις αἰὲν ἔστω·
νῦν κρότος, αἶψα δὲ τᾶθλ' ἀγέσθω.

D'Angour provides his own translation into English verse:

Behold this new Olympic torch, the flames
that first blazed forth at Greece's early dawn:
Now give a rousing welcome to these Games,
on London's riverbanks reborn.

Applaud as rival teams, in sport allied,
march in from the far corners of the earth.
The poet now must emulate their stride
and craft an ode to sporting worth.

A countless throng of watchers will observe
the dazzling relays of the running-teams,
watch rival oarsmen straining every nerve,
and gymnasts on the balance-beams.

The crowds will view with wonder and delight
the rider urge her horse about and back,
the skillful archer draw his bowstring tight,
the lightning bolt around the track.

The drums will volley and the pipes play loud
as tales of victory are daily told;
the stands will echo to the cheering crowd
when victors raise the prize of gold.

Now welcome all to Britain's sea-girt land:
join London's Mayor and company within.
To all who strive may fortune lend a hand:
applaud, and let the Games begin!

In the Telegraph 23rd July 2012: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/news/9420192/London-2012-Olympics-Boris-Johnson-to-recite-Olympic-Ode-in-ancient-Greek.html>

This light-hearted and witty approach is in contrast to the often-perceived high-minded and serious nature of Classics and perhaps reflects more closely the modern idea of Greek studies.

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