

V A R I A D I D A C T I C A  
THE RHODES COLLECTION  
A NATIONAL ASSET

Virtually all of the biographies which discuss Cecil Rhodes' private life, as opposed to his political and business career, record that his favourite reading was Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.<sup>1</sup> His fascination with the latter led to a project which could have been Southern Africa's greatest contribution to Classical scholarship. The scheme was some time in its formulation, as the original idea was conceived on his lengthy visit to England in 1888 (before his return in August 1889) when he was chiefly occupied with securing a Royal charter for the British South Africa Company.<sup>2</sup> It was not until around 1893 that the plan was put into action.<sup>3</sup> In discussing Gibbon "during a country house visit" (Williams 1921:223) Rhodes regretted that he could not read in the original Greek and Latin the ancient authorities quoted by Gibbon and that there were no good translations readily available; he was advised to consult Mr. Arthur Humphreys of Hatchards. The following is Mr. Humphreys' account of what happened:

"One afternoon about the year 1893, Mr. Rhodes, accompanied by Mr. Rochfort Maguire called on me. Mr. Rhodes stated his business at once which was, that on his last trip over from South Africa he had re-read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and he had been so much impressed by the book that he thought of forming a library, which was to consist of all the original authorities used by Gibbon in writing his history. I talked the matter over with him for some considerable time that afternoon, and broad lines were roughly laid down upon which the work should proceed. Mr. Rhodes, I remember, emphasised two things from the start. These were: first, that whatever I sent him should be in English, and whatever authors required translation, they should be sent completely unabridged. And secondly, he stated that he realised the magnitude of the undertaking, and that he hoped I should get a body of men together who would be glad to cooperate in such a work, and whoever was employed, he said he wished to be well paid. This was the first interview I ever had with Mr. Rhodes. He took out his cheque-book before he went, and left me a cheque for a handsome sum towards the work.

I soon got together a body of scholars, and appointed one who was to be a general editor of the whole series of volumes. The work proceeded, and a large number of volumes were sent out, Mr. Rhodes writing to me from time to time general directions how to proceed, and very clearly stating his special interest in various aspects of the matter ....

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<sup>1</sup> Fuller 1910:134, 245; Williams 1921:223; Plomer 1984:133; Lockhart & Woodhouse, *Rhodes* 1963:22, 30, 64, 66, 67, 208.

<sup>2</sup> See the memoir by Mr. A. Humphreys in Fuller (1910:133f.) - quoted below *in extenso*.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Humphreys' account requires that Rhodes was in England to initiate the project - further visits took place in the winters of 1890-1891 and 1894-1895.

At one time I had as many as twenty scholars engaged to do the work, in addition to indexers, typists, binders ..."

Mr. Humphreys also writes that "some hundreds of volumes were sent out", but this includes more than the classical translations.<sup>4</sup> Indeed a sizeable proportion of the books represent an extension of the original plan, to include translations of relatively modern biographies of the emperors. For example, on Julius Caesar there are translations of French works by Ramée (1870), Dubois-Guchon (1880); on Domitian translations of French biographies by Crevier (1814) and the Count de Champagny (1863) and, of particular interest, of the magisterial work of S. Gsell published only in 1894.<sup>5</sup>

According to Williams, the collection was originally planned to be even larger and include the works of the Church Fathers quoted by Gibbon "but when it came to the apparently endless series of the complete works of the Fathers of the Church, from whom Gibbon had quarried, he (Rhodes) had to cry halt, and issued an order that the Fathers must cease" (Williams 1921:223). This rather rhetorical description must be inaccurate: no work of any of the Fathers survives in the collection today and Mr. Humphreys mentions no intention of translating the Christian works.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps there was a suggestion that they should be included in the plan which never went any further, but the works of the Fathers were never part of Rhodes' interests - he drew his philosophical comfort rather from the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

For Williams the cost of the project led Rhodes to cancel it - but only after some £8,000 had been spent; in modern terms this would represent an investment of several million Rands.

An intriguing feature of the project is that the names of the scholars engaged to do the translations remain unknown: none of the volumes contains any name or indication of their identity. In the odd volume there are pencilled notes, for example "corrected by J.H.F.", but this is no guide to the translator. Indeed the kind of correction seen in the translations suggests that the correctors were little more than proof-readers; improvements to the substance of the translation are not made. If any record of the identity of the translators and editors survived among Hatchards' archives, that was lost during the Blitz. The books themselves present a splendid sight in the Library at Groote Schuur with their bright red Morocco bindings and titles engraved in gilt on the spine. Their internal appearance, however, is far less impressive: the translations are typed in double-spacing, often with errors corrected in manuscript.

Some of Rhodes' biographers are dismissive of the whole project: Williams "the collection

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4 There are, in fact, 208 volumes of typed translations of ancient Latin and Greek authors. Only when the other kinds of typed volumes (see below) are included does Mr. Humphreys' figure become justifiable.

5 This section of the project includes much older biographies - several with notable engravings and illustrations - translated from L. Hulsius' Latin works on the wives of Julius Caesar and Caligula (1597). Again numerous antiquarian works from the earlier period: for example, Johannes Meursius on *The Luxury of the Romans*.

6 The translation of Juvenius' *Evangeliorum Libri IV*, a version of the gospels in Latin hexameters, hardly belongs among the Fathers, despite its Christian theme. The major fire at Groote Schuur in December 1896 which, according to Williams (1921:224) destroyed some books, should not be adduced to explain the non-appearance of the Fathers. It would be an extraordinary coincidence if all the Fathers had been destroyed without trace of damage to the pagan authors.

is a freak hardly worthy of Rhodes" and Lockhart and Woodhouse "an extravagant and unrewarding experiment". Plomer's thorough and unscholarly traduction of Rhodes adds the following scurrilous details "the collection naturally included works 'of a decidedly erotic nature', all suitably illustrated - much to the delight of some dependent, who cut the pictures out privily and carried them off".<sup>7</sup> In fact, from a personal examination of those volumes most likely to have contained obscene illustrations, for example, the pederastic and erotic epigrams from the Greek Anthology, I can attest that there is no evidence of any illustrations having been removed.

The verdict of the (South African) classicist should differ from that of Rhodes' critics. The translations are in general of a high standard.<sup>8</sup> Many of the works had not been translated into English before and some have not been since, although the texts are important to students of ancient history and literature.<sup>9</sup> If they could be made available to a wider audience within South Africa or even further afield, they would be very useful.

After many years of negotiation with successive Ministers of Education and with the occupants of Groote Schuur, the Department of Classics at the University of Cape Town has been granted access to the translations, so that a scholarly evaluation and reworking of them, where necessary, can be undertaken and publication of those volumes which would serve a scholarly purpose can be arranged.<sup>10</sup> It is to be hoped that this part of Rhodes' rich legacy to South Africa may yet reach the wider audience it deserves.

If any Classical scholars in South Africa are interested in consulting any of the translations or would like to collaborate in utilising this resource the best way for them to obtain access would be by contacting the Department of Classics at UCT.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Flint, J. 1974. *Cecil Rhodes*. Boston: Little.

Fuller, Sir Thomas E. 1910. *The Right Honourable Cecil John Rhodes: a monograph and a reminiscence*. London: Longmans.

Lockhart, J.G. & Woodhouse, C.M. 1963. *Rhodes*. London.

Plomer, W.C.F. 1933 and 1984. *Cecil Rhodes*. London: Davies; Cape Town: Philip.

Williams, B. 1921. *Cecil Rhodes*. London: Constable.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. the slur also in Flint's parenthetical remarks (1974:172).

<sup>8</sup> This is my impression from a brief perusal of a selection of the volumes. I have studied with greater attention the translation of the *Ephemeris Belli Troiani* by Dictys of Crete, which is of serviceable quality. The translator has captured the spirit of Dictys, whilst treating his syntax freely. (S)he, for example, has the annoying habit of ignoring temporal expressions such as *interea*, and *inter haec*. There has been an inevitable dating of some aspects of language since the late 19th century, but on the whole the work is pleasantly readable. Dr. M.R. Mezzabotta has examined the translation of the first book of Servius' Commentary on *Aeneid* I.

<sup>9</sup> See the list of works in the appendix.

<sup>10</sup> Professor J.E. Atkinson fought a long battle with successive Ministers to gain access to the collection. Only under the current administration has progress been possible.

TRANSLATIONS OF CLASSICAL AUTHORS

IN THE RHODES COLLECTION

Author	Title of Work	Volume No.
Aelian	<i>Varia Historia</i>	9 <sup>a</sup>
	<i>Epistulae rur.</i>	8
Aelius Aristides	<i>Opera Omnia</i>	30-36
Aeschylus	<i>Tragoediae</i>	10
Aethicus, Ister	<i>Cosmographia</i>	11
Agathias	<i>Historia</i>	12-13
Alciphron	<i>Epistulae</i>	14
Ampelius	<i>Liber memorialis</i>	16
Anacreon	<i>Poemata</i>	17
Anna Comnena	<i>Alexiad</i>	18-20
Antiphon	<i>Orationes</i>	21
Antonius Diogenes	<i>Mirabilia ultra Thulem</i>	238
Apicius	<i>De re coquinaria</i>	22
Apuleius	<i>Opera Omnia</i>	25-28
Aristaenetus	<i>Epistulae</i>	29
Aristophanes	<i>Comoediae</i>	37-38
[Arrian]	<i>Periplus maris Erythrae</i>	239
Attaliata, Michael	<i>Historia</i>	39-40
Ausonius	<i>Opera Omnia</i>	41-42
Avienus	<i>Aratea Phaenomena et Prognostica</i>	43
Bassus, Saleius	<i>Panegyricus ad Calpurnium Pisonem</i>	16
Berosus	<i>Babyloniaca</i>	59
Boethius	<i>De Consolatione Philosophiae</i>	60
Caelius Symphosius	<i>Enigmata</i>	16
Calpurnius Siculus	<i>Eclogae</i>	65
Cameniatia, Johannes	<i>De captura Thessalonicae</i>	66
Catullus	<i>Poemata</i>	72
Censorinus	<i>De Die Natali</i>	73
Cicero	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>	76
Cinnamus	<i>Historiae</i>	78-79
Claudian	<i>Opera Omnia</i>	80-81
Constantine Porphyrogenitus	<i>De ceremoniis</i>	250-254
Cornutus	<i>Compendium Theologiae Graecae</i>	43
Cosmas Indicopleustes	<i>Christiana Topographia</i>	83
Curtius Rufus	<i>De rebus gestis Alexandri Magni</i>	261-262
Dares	<i>De excidio Troiae historia</i>	113
Dexippus	<i>Scythica</i>	16
Dictys Cretensis	<i>Encheiridion De bello Troiano</i>	113
Dio Cassius	<i>Historiae</i>	114-123
Dio Chrysostom	<i>Orations, Discourses, Treatises</i>	124-129
Etruscus, Maximianus	<i>Elegiae</i>	139
Euripides	<i>Dramata (not complete)</i>	140-141
Exuperantius	<i>Bella Civilia</i>	16
Frontinus	<i>De Aquis</i>	65
Fronto	<i>Epistulae</i>	144

\* A retyping of the translation printed for Thomas Dringin (1665).

Greek Anthology	Selection	82
	Pederastic epigrams ( <i>Musa Puerilus</i> )	217
	Erotic epigrams	138
Herodas	<i>Mimae</i>	151
Herodes Atticus	<i>De re publica</i> (and minor works)	16
Hesychius	<i>De sophistis</i>	152
Horace	<i>Saturae</i>	153
Hyginus	<i>Fabulae</i>	155
	<i>De munitionibus castrorum</i>	152
	<i>Astronomiae</i>	156
Jordanes	<i>Getica</i>	166-167
	<i>Romana</i>	168
Julian	<i>Opera omnia</i>	169-173 <sup>b</sup>
Justin	<i>Historiae Philippicae</i>	174-176
Juvencus	<i>Evangeliorum libri IV</i>	73
Laonicus Chalcocondyles	<i>History of the Turks</i>	74-75
Latin Anthology	Various items <sup>c</sup>	184-185
Lucian	<i>Amores</i>	188
Lycurgus	<i>Adversus Leocratem</i>	189
Macrobius	<i>Opera omnia</i>	190-193
Malchus	<i>De Legationibus</i>	194
Marcellinus	<i>Chronicon</i>	152
Martial	<i>Epigrammata</i>	195-199
Menander the Guardsman	<i>De legationibus</i>	214
Merovir	?	215
Musonius Rufus	<i>De luxuria</i>	218
Namatianus	<i>De Reditu</i>	16
Nemesianus	<i>Cynegetica</i>	65
Nicetas	<i>Historia</i>	219-221
Nicolaus Damascenus	<i>Historiae</i>	92
Obsequens	<i>Liber Prodigiorum</i>	11
Olympiodorus	<i>Chronicles</i> (Excerpts from)	222
Ovid	<i>Opera Omnia</i>	226-233
Panegyrici Veteres	<i>Panegyricae</i>	236-237
Parthenius	<i>Erotica</i>	238
Phaedrus	<i>Fabulae</i>	240
Philostratus	<i>Vita Apollonii</i>	241-242
	<i>Apologia and Letters</i>	243
	<i>Vita Sophistarum</i>	244-245
Plautus	<i>Comoediae</i>	246-249
Polemon	<i>Declamations</i>	11
Priscus of Panium	<i>Historia</i>	255
Procopius	<i>Secret History</i>	260 <sup>d</sup>
	<i>Historia bellorum Justiniani</i>	256-259 <sup>e</sup>
Scriptores Hist. Aug.	<i>Historia Augusta</i>	265-268
Scylitzes, John	<i>History</i>	268-270
Seneca	<i>Epistulae</i>	271-279 <sup>f</sup>
	<i>Dialogi</i>	271-279 <sup>f</sup>
	<i>Naturales quaestiones</i>	142

<sup>b</sup> *Orationes* iv and v translated by Thomas Taylor.

<sup>c</sup> Contents include Seneca's epigrams, Vergiliana, Octavian, Dido's epistle to Aeneas, Achilles' speech at Scyros.

<sup>d</sup> Retyping of translation printed for John Barkisdale of London (1674).

<sup>e</sup> Retyping of translation by Henry Holcroft (1653).

<sup>f</sup> Retyping of edition printed by W. Stansby of London (1620).

Servius	<i>Comm. in Aeneidem I</i>	282-283
Sextus Empiricus	<i>Adversus Mathematicos</i>	284-286
	<i>Adversus Pyrrhonem</i>	287
Silius Italicus	<i>Punica</i>	288-290
Solinus	<i>Collectanea rerum memorabilium</i>	291
Statius	<i>Silvae</i>	292
Suetonius	<i>De vita Caesarum</i>	410-412
Symmachus	<i>Epistulae</i>	293-295
Terence	<i>Comoediae</i>	296-297
Theognis	<i>Elegiae</i>	298
Theophylactus Simocatta	<i>Historiae</i>	299-300
Valerius, Julius	<i>De rebus gestis Alexandri Magni</i>	301
Valerius Flaccus	<i>Argonauticon</i>	142
Vegetius	<i>Epitoma rei militaris</i>	302 <sup>s</sup>
Vibius Sequester	<i>Geographical glossary</i>	16
Victor, Sex. Aurelius	<i>Epitome de Caesaribus</i>	303
Zonaras	<i>Epitome Historiarum</i>	304-313
Zosimus	<i>Historia Nova</i>	314-315

## CLASSICAL CIVILISATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

At the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, Classical Civilisation has been a two-year major in the Faculties of Arts and Social Science for almost 25 years. During this period the subject has gone through three significant periods which I shall outline in the course of this paper, highlighting successes and failures and hopefully indicating which direction the subject should be taking, as we chart the unknown waters of university education in the South Africa of the future.

The first phase of Classical Civilisation at UNP I shall call "Oxbridge in the colonies". The staff, entirely Oxbridge trained, believed that Classical Civilisation was a bogus academic discipline for dilettantish students who fancied careers as Sandton hostesses, or that it was a pleasant pastime for lavender-haired old ladies who went to Italy during the summer vacation and produced elegant water colours of Roman ruins with captions like "Lavinia and I contemplate the transience of mortal things". The course was divided into three sections - literature, philosophy and ancient history, and was dominated by vast chunks of the latter. This was regarded as the scholarly component of the course: the narrative was assumed to be read; ancient history meant problems in the source material and hours were devoted to the pedantic *minutiae* of conspiracies ... Catiline, Primus and Murena, and the agrarian laws for light relief. There were constant moans from the staff about teaching literature or philosophy (in particular the Pre-socratics and Plato) in translation: the translations were inadequate or misleading, the class had no Greek or Latin, and much time was spent in giving the students the actual transliterated Greek or the Latin which appeared in garbled glory in examinations. The only rejoicing occurred when one of these students decided to enrol for a course in Greek or Latin - then Classical Civilisation was seen to have had some real purpose. If, armed with one year of Latin and one year of Greek, they went on to read for an honours degree in Classical Civilisation,

<sup>s</sup> Retyping of translation by Lieutenant John Clarke (1767).