

Noni,

Glad you liked the translations, although I wouldn't, myself, describe them as 'wonderful': I was going for **one-to-one accuracy, a literal version as opposed to a literary one**. Turning the pieces into English poetry (which, perhaps, is how they ought to be treated) would require a much less rigid approach, using my text only as a starting point—please feel free to do this or have it done, if you've a mind.

Regarding accuracy, an apology: I've solved the problem of **the 'per'** (see footnote 4) in the last stanza of the first poem, and in consequence I'm kicking myself for being a complete idiot (so much for expertise!), because given that there are other flaws/miscopyings in the text I should've thought of it in the first place.

'Per curo' is a misprint for the single word **'percurro'**, **'I run through'**, and taking it as such (or rather, as **'read over'**, which is an okay translation in this case) makes the Latin perfectly clear and correct: **'Sitting all day by the blazing hearth, I read over some books, particularly...'** Could you amend the translation accordingly, and replace the current wording of the footnote with: **'Reading "per curo" as "percurro", "I run through"'**?

All the best
[David Wishart](#)

Ode on the Foot of Donald Macdonald, wounded at the Battle of Culloden by a leaden musket-ball

Alas! How many heroes fell in the too-bloody battle of Culloden, whose bodies lay despoiled at daybreak!

I saw the son of Col¹ (I shudder in the telling of it) fall at our side, from whom no-one who challenged him to equal fight had [ever] snatched the palm. Instead of a grave, these men were left to the ravening beasts of the field, while as many as still lived were torn apart by savage wounds.

A terrible ball from a hollow musket spitting lightning and fire, whistling² through the air, pierced my foot with huge force. It tore not only the flesh, the delicate fibres and the tendons but the very bones, and shearing through the leather bindings it despoiled me all at once of my shoe.

Now I will go about lame in one foot, like the black archetype-smith,³ treading [lit. 'striking'] with difficulty the grass of the verdant plain. Not for me, now, as before, the joys of hunting, of dancing [lit. 'jumping'], of swimming, nor do I care to touch the swelling breasts of young girls.

When I seek my bed at night, desirous of rest, sleep closes my eyes very rarely, and [only] briefly, because of the excessive pain in my wounded foot.

In the morning, when I leave my warm nest, there gather round me old women [reading 'vetulae'] and old men, asking [reading 'rogantes'] me much about the war of Charles and the Butcher [Cumberland].

Sitting the whole day through by the blazing hearth, I read through some books, particularly [those concerning] the wars set to verse by the blind poet [i.e. Homer]⁴.

Meanwhile, it is the conscientious doctor's care to treat my wounded limb, and I pray the benign Creator of the World to favour what he has undertaken.

¹ McColl; the Latin footnote translates as 'Keppoch, whose father's name was Col'.

² Latin footnote on 'sibilans', 'whistling'/'whispering: Better – as the author himself said – 'flying'.

³ Latin footnote: Vulcan.

⁴ I'm not absolutely sure about this verse: that 'per' must go, somehow, with 'tota luce', ie 'throughout the whole day', but it's misplaced, unnecessary, and shouldn't take an ablative. Possibly it reproduces the English word order, 'the whole day through' – which is how I've translated it – as opposed to 'throughout the day'; in Latin, 'per totam diem'. Also, there's no infinitive with 'curo' ('I care for'): a literal translation here would be 'I care for various books.'

The Lamentation of Donald Macdonald, in Hiding after the Battle of Culloden

Ah, what solitude I bear as I wander the sheer peaks of the mountains, through the many [lit. 'several'] glens, the caves in the rocks, and the bristling heather!

In the forests now my companions are the deer, my comforters, with their cries, the cuckoos; now the doves lessen my weariness with their soft murmur.

A great force of soldiers pursue[d] me, because I refuse[d] to betray Prince Charles. But I strove to pass safely through the weapons of my enemies.

Countless ants, midges and wasps swarm, with heat and cold in turn, as if they have made treaty⁵ with the Duke of Cumberland.

Not so terrible to me is George, whom Great Britain obeys as her lord, as are the little midges, than whom the Butcher Duke himself is scarcely a more pitiless enemy!

They always find my hiding-places, they fly into my face, they pierce my skin with their wound-inflicting bites [lit. 'beaks'] and sate their bellies with my blood.

Long we fought bravely, on both sides; many bodies of midges were laid low on the earth, and my face was covered with many wounds.

Finally, overcome by the number of my enemies, I fled, seeking the steep places of the mountains, and immediately the hateful swarm followed me, wherever I went.

I was not [lit. 'scarcely'] rid of this pestiferous crowd until, in my misery, a wind sprang up, and breathing on the midges dispersed them and sent them with its breath to hell [lit. 'across the waters of the Styx'].

A more longed-for day will scarcely come for me until George is dead, and a new king succeeds to the throne who wishes to be kinder to his people.

Day and night I pray in my heart that either this shining day will come or that a war bloodier than before will vex the kingdoms of Britain.

Oh, if that time reaches my ears, I will dare to leave my hiding-places, and setting George's menacing weapons at nought to give myself [back] openly to the world.

⁵ 'Sancissunt' doesn't exist. I'm reading it as 'sanci[sc]unt', from 'foedus sancire', to conclude a treaty.