

BLOCHER, BROOKS, AND AUGUST KOPISCH: A REPORT ON AN
UNPUBLISHED TRANSLATION*

by

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German poets of the mid-nineteenth century found an appreciative reader and skilled translator in Charles Timothy Brooks (1813-1833), New England poet and writer, scholar and clergyman. Born in Salem, Massachusetts and educated at Harvard, Brooks served most of his life as pastor to the Unitarian congregation of Newport, R. I. In Newport he began writing for belletristic journals, contributing essays, translations, and original poetry. Probably his most lasting achievement as a translator was his early rendition of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1837) and of Goethe's *Faust*, Part I (1862). With the publication of the latter work, Brooks became one of the first Americans to render Goethe's drama in the original meter and rhyme, and by translating some of the minor German poets into English, he made available to an English-speaking public poems which but for him would have remained untranslated.

Many of Brook's translations have appeared in book form; others, in various magazines and newspapers. A great number, however, apparently done as a labor of love, were never published; even a posthumously published volume of Brook's works (1885) makes no pretense of being complete and lists in its bibliography "a great number of [unpublished] poems and prose extracts translated from the German, French, Italian, Latin,

Greek, and other languages."¹ Also, Camillo von Klenze, writing his definitive book on Brooks in 1937, found that many of Brooks' translations still await publication.²

One of these translations, this one apparently submitted for publication, appears among the papers of the late Edward Carey Gardiner, a member of the publishing house Carey, Lea, and Blanchard of Philadelphia. These papers are now, uncatalogued, in the archives of the library of the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia, and still await thorough scholarly exploration.³ The MS is a translation of a poem by August Kopisch (1799-1853), one of the *Freiheitsdichter*, a group of poets who called for a war of liberation against Napoleon. Brooks, who personally knew and for many years corresponded with several *Freiheitsdichter*, displayed an abiding enthusiasm for their cause and their poetry. His specific interest in the poet-painter Kopisch, previously demonstrated by his translation of "Der grosse Krebs im Mohringer See" (The Giant Crab of Lake Mohrin), the German writer's best known poem, is further illustrated by this unpublished translation of "Blücher am Rhein."⁴

Blücher am Rhein

Die Heere blieben am
Rheine stehn:
Soll man hinein nach
Frankreich gehn?
Man dachte hin und
wieder nach,
Allein der alte
Blücher sprach:
"Generalkarte her!"

Blücher at the Rhine (from the German of Kopisch)

The armies halted at the
Rhine:
Now shall we go
To France or no?
The question ran along the
Rhine;
Then out and spoke old
Blücher,
"Ho!"

Nach Frankreich gehn ist
 nicht so schwer.
 Wo steht der Feind?"--
 'Der Feind?--dahier!!
 "Den Finger drauf! das
 nehmen wir!
 Nun schlägt die Brücken
 über'n Rhein.
 Ich denke der
 Champagnerwein
 Wird, wo er wächst, am
 besten sein!"

Bring me the map (says he),
 I'll show
 'Tis not so hard to France
 to go.
 Where stands the foe?" "The
 foe--why there.
 "Your finger on it--we'll
 take care
 of him. Where's Paris?"--
 Paris here--!"
 "Mark that! 'tis ours! oh
 never fear!
 Now throw your bridges over
 the Rhine,
 The Champagne wine,
 I do suppose,
 Will taste the sweetest where
 it grows."

In this translation Brooks, though taking some liberties with the rhyme scheme and the length of the lines, carefully preserves the mood and retains Kopisch' iambic pattern and enjambement. Brooks' careful work, demonstrated in this translation, together with his personal friendship with various German poets, might have assured him of a more lasting place in the lore of Americana Germanica, if he had not been overshadowed by his more illustrious contemporaries, Emerson, Lowell, and Longfellow.

FOOTNOTES

*This is an abbreviated version of a paper given before the Ohio Folklore Society.

¹Charles T. Brooks, *Poems, Original and Translated*, ed. W. P. Andrews (Boston: Robert Brothers, 1885), p. 235.

²Camillo von Klenze, *Charles Timothy Brooks, Translator from the German, and the Genteel Tradition* (Boston: Heath, 1937), p. 100f.

³These holdings are not mentioned in a most informative article about the German MSS in that library. Cf. Heinrich Schneider and Marvin C. Dilkey, "Letters by German Authors of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," GR, XV (Dec. 1940), pp. 239-257.

⁴For Brooks' translation of "Der grosse Krebs," see his German Lyrics (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Field, 1853), p. 195. Kopisch's Blücher poem appears in Kopischs ausgewählte Gedichte, Bibliothek der deutschen Klassiker, XX (Hildburghausen, 1861-64), 337f.

DER GREIS

Ich bin alt, sehr alt,
 Und müde, so müde und schwach,
 Mir zittern die blassen Hände im Schoss,
 Und der Herbstwind rauscht im Dürrblätterwald,
 Rauscht ängstlich über die Felder--brach,
 hinaus in die Nacht der Schreckensgespenster,
 Wo Geister treiben auf silbernem Floss--
 Komm weg, Alter, komm weg vom Fenster!

Herman F. Brause
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