

2. 12. 1958

B33-400

Dear Synge,

Many thanks for your letter. I fully agree in all essential points. Indeed I never threw into question the correctness of your results, I only objected to your kind of derivation. In fact my proposal was not at all sophisticated (and you have accepted it); just what you ~~do~~ have to do so often: get your result in a particular frame (or class of frames) and then observe, that it is precisely what a certain tensor equation becomes in that frame. E.g. with  $\Gamma^i_{ke}$  being a symmetric affine connection and  $B^i_{k\epsilon m}$  its curvature tensor, you can establish Palatini's famous relation ~~in two lines~~

$$\delta B^i_{k\epsilon m} = -(\delta \Gamma^i_{ke})_{;m} + (\delta \Gamma^i_{km})_{;e}$$

by first using a frame where, at the point in question, the  $\Gamma$ 's all vanish, then observing... as said above. (Nb.: the variations  $\delta \Gamma^i_{ke}$  need not be restricted to symmetry). In a similar way the Bianchi identities are obtained. -

I was interested in your "experiment in translation", the more so since I was of the probably very few receivers who had the original Villon-text at hand (together with a good German translation - a free one, but hardly freer than your English one.)

I think you have <sup>put yourself</sup> much too difficult a task by not only copying the meter (about which, in the case of French, some remarks will follow later) but maintaining two rhimes, extending through  $3\frac{1}{2}$  stanzas, even more accurately than the original. For I am fairly certain that moyme and royme in the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza did not at all rime properly with the corresponding endings in the other stanzas. I guess that e.g.





the vowel in)

royne was pronounced like the word boy in modern English (the modern French pronunciation of the "oi" is irrelevant, it was proletarian slang and was only received after the revolution in 1789). Royne is an astonishing word anyhow, probably a feminine formed from roy, and later dropped for the gemine reine (formed from Latin regina). But even modern reine is not <sup>good</sup> reine to humane etc. Or is it? But modern pronunciation is irrelevant anyhow.

In the concluding half-stanza I suspect two, but I am fairly certain of one, mistranslation. I believe the meaning is: My prince, not even after one week, still less after a year has elapsed, seeks you after them (viz. lady-friends that have forsaken you) lest you be always thrown back on the vain question: But where has last winter's snow gone to? (I.e. you'll not get them back, as little as last winter's snow - so little as little about them.) -

Indeed without this the whole poem is tedious and meaningless. Why the dunces should "my prince" bother about Flora, Héloïse, Blanche, La Pucelle etc.!

Now as regards French (or Greek) meters, quite in general. What behoves one language, does not <sup>usually</sup> fit another one. E.g. hexameters and distichs are pretty unbearable in English or German. The alexandrine, when properly scanned (i.e. with four, not rise, main stresses) is possible in French. In English and German they hammer on your nerves. Nearly the <sup>analogous</sup> ~~same~~ holds for the iambic trimeter in Greek tragedy, which in English or German must be turned into 5-footed blank-verse. I have recently compared Gilbert Murray's famous translations of Greek tragedies (in unrimed 5-foot iambs) with the equally famous of Williamowitz-Müllerdorf (most of them unrimed trimeters, i.e. 6-foot iambs with a certain caesura banned - just the one, by the way, that is obligatory in the alexandrine and makes it so terrific). Naturally, both are first class, but Murray is ever so much more pleasant. He speaks <sup>more</sup> my language - though it is English he speaks. Maybe I am prejudiced. For I knew him, I sat at his feet, I knew him as a darling. The other man was - a Prussian. - All good wishes to the two of you, also from Amy.

As ever yours Edwin Müllerdorf