

Levi Robert Lind

André Chénier, *Elegies and Camille*, tranl. by L. R. Lind. A Bilingual Edition, Washington, University Press of America, 1978, p. 21-22

Introduction

by L. R. Lind

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D. The Translation

Valéry calls translation a labor of approximation; it is also an exercise in substitution. If one does not wish to paraphrase merely or to write something only suggested by the original or to modernize it out of all recognition as is the fashion today among some translators who do not even pretend to know the original language then one must make an honest attempt to reproduce the model before one with the best means available. The meter is important but sometimes less important than it may appear to be. While it is possible to reproduce the alexandrine in English it has not yet become acclimated. Meanwhile a serviceable form is at hand as companion for the French alexandrine couplet: the eighteenth century English heroic couplet, which I have used here. Although the alexandrine is a longer line it is possible to handle it with the English line; the end-rhyme reinforces the effect of an end-stopped finality which is needed in spite of Chénier's frequent *enjambement*, the throwing of part of the meaning and words of one line over to the next. The associations and the flavor of the English couplet are of Chénier's own time and place as well. I hope I have made his verses and mine fairly comfortable companions.

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