

**ON THE SUBLIME: TRANSLATED
FROM THE GREEK. WITH NOTES
AND OBSERVATIONS, AND SOME
ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE, WRITINGS,
AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR**

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On the Sublime: Translated from the Greek. With Notes and Observations, and Some Account of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author by Longinus & William Smith

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LONGINUS & WILLIAM SMITH

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English Notes.
DIONYSIUS LONGINUS

ON THE

SUBLIME :

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK.

- WITH

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS,

AND

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE
LIFE, WRITINGS, AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR.

BY WILLIAM SMITH, D. D.
DEAN OF CHESTER.

Thee, great Longinus! all the Nine inspire,
And fill their critic with a poet's fire;
An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,
With warmth gives sentence, and is always just;
Whose own example strengthens all his laws,
And is himself the great Sublime he draws.

POPE.

LONDON :

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
GEORGE, EARL OF MACCLESFIELD,

Viscount Parker of Ewelme, and Baron Parker of Macclesfield.

MY LORD,

The greatest degree of purity and splendour united, that LONGINUS has for some ages appeared in, was under the patronage of the late Lord MACCLESFIELD. A writer of so much spirit and judgment, had a just claim to the protection of so elevated a genius, and so judicious an encourager of polite learning. Longinus is now going to appear in an English dress, and begs the support of your LORDSHIP'S name. He has undergone no farther alteration, than what was absolutely necessary to make him English. His sense is faithfully represented; but whether this translation has any of the original spirit, is a decision peculiar only to those who can relish unaffected grandeur and natural Sublimity, with the same judicious taste as your Lordship.

It is needless to say any thing to your Lordship about the other parts of this performance, since they alone can plead effectually for themselves. I went through this work, animated with a view of pleas-

*ing every body; and publish it in some fear of
pleasing none. Yet I lay hold with pleasure on
this opportunity of paying my respects to your
LORDSHIP, and giving this public proof, that
I am,*

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient

and most humble Servant,

WILLIAM SMITH.

P R E F A C E.

It will, without doubt, be expected, that the Reader should be made privy to the reasons upon which this Work was undertaken, and is now made public. The intrinsic beauty of the piece itself first allured me to the attempt; and a regard for the public, especially for those who might be unable to read the original, was the main inducement to its publication.

The *Traité* on the *SUBLIME* had slept for several ages, covered up in the dust of libraries, till the middle of the sixteenth century. The first Latin version by Gabriel de Petra was printed at Geneva in 1612. But the first good translation of it into any modern language, was the French one of the famous Boileau, which, though not always faithful to the text, yet has an elegance and a spirit which few will ever be able to equal, much less to surpass.

The present translation was finished before I knew of any prior attempt to make Longinus speak English. The first translation of him I met with, was published by Mr. Welsted, in 1724. But I was very much surprised, upon a perusal, to find it only Boileau's translation misrepresented and mangled. For every beauty is impaired, if not totally effaced, and every error (even down to those of the printer) most injudiciously preserved.

I have since accidentally met with two other English versions of this *Traité*; one by J. Hall, Esq. London, 1652; the other without a name, but printed at Oxford in 1698, and said in the title-page to have been compared with the French of Boileau. I saw nothing in either of these which did not yield the greatest encouragement to a new attempt.

No less than nine years have intervened since the finishing

of this translation, in which space it has been frequently revised, submitted to the censure of friends, and amended again and again by a more attentive study of the original. The design was, if possible, to make it read like an original: whether I have succeeded in this, the bulk of my readers may judge; but whether the translation be good, or come any thing near to the life, the spirit, the energy of Longinus, is a decision peculiar to men of learning and taste, who alone know the difficulties which attend such an undertaking, and will be impartial enough to give the translator the necessary indulgence.

Longinus himself was never accurately enough published, nor thoroughly understood, till Dr. Pearce * did him justice in his late editions at London. My thanks are due to that gentleman, not only for his correct editions, on account of which the whole learned world is indebted to him, but for those animadversions and corrections of this translation, with which he so kindly favoured me. Most of the remarks and observations were drawn up before I had read his Latin notes.

I am not the least in pain about the pertinency of those instances which I have brought from the sacred writers, as well as from some of the finest of our own country, to illustrate the criticisms of Longinus. I am only fearful, lest, among the multiplicity of such as might be had, I may be thought to have omitted some of the best. I am sensible, that what I have done, might be done much better; but if I have the good fortune to contribute a little towards the fixing a true judicious taste, and enabling my readers to distinguish sense from sound, grandeur from pomp, and the Sublime from fustian and bombast, I shall think my time well spent; and shall be ready to submit to the censures of a judge, but shall only smile at the snarling of what is commonly called a critic.

* Now Lord Bishop of Rochester.

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