

Translation

This title of this *Sofia* is ‘Translation’ – all kinds of translation

Where do novelists get their ideas? From imagination and above all, from life. Penny Mawdsley describes how Jane Austen translated from life to art. She took the true story of Dido Belle, daughter of a West Indian slave and a British naval officer, who was brought up by her great uncle Lord Mansfield, and ‘translated’ it into her novel *Mansfield Park* with its heroine Fanny Price.

I have written something about different kinds of translating and transferring (both words come from the same Latin verb). Then I consider the Great Translation (to which SOF contributes), expressed in the Christmas hymn: ‘He came down to Earth from heaven’. In a change of genre from literal accounts to ‘poetic tales’, the divine supernatural is translated ‘down to Earth’.

Frank Walker describes a practical ‘translation’ of the ‘kingdom of God’ into the humdrum – and as he says, quite commonplace – human kindness of looking after someone terminally ill at home.

Dominic Kirkham asks whether the original Jesus got lost in translation.

There is plenty more in this *Sofia*. Andy Kemp revisits Christopher Hill’s classic work on the English Revolution, *The World Turned Upside Down*. Francis McDonagh comments on the US election. There are the usual letters, reviews and John Pearson’s *As I Please*. Letters to the Editor with comments and responses are always welcome.

The poem below is a translation both from German into English and from 1950s Austria to lockdown Britain today.

October Night

Chair, bring me a guest.
 Table, bring me a cheerful meal.
 Lamp, show me a friendly face,
 not my own in the mirror.
 Chair, bring me a guest.
 Table, bring me a cheerful meal.
 Window, open onto a warm land.
 Suitcase, take my hand
 and fly me to Egypt.
 Chair, bring me a guest.
 Table, bring me a cheerful meal.
 Telephone bird, sing for me.
 Or bring me a cellar-deep winter sleep,
 bed.

Ernst Jandl
 translated by Dinah Livingstone

Ernst Jandl was an Austrian poet born in 1925. His poem ‘Oktobernacht’, written in 1954, was published in his collection *Andere Augen* (Bergland, Vienna 1956).