

SUSANNA BRAUND and ZARA MARTIROSOVA TORLONE (EDS), *VIRGIL AND HIS TRANSLATORS* (Classical Presences). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. ix + 520. ISBN 9780198810810. £110.

Though bound so intimately to the politics of his specific place and cultural moment, Virgil's works have proved highly portable, embraced successively by different societies, doing different cultural work each time. 'Literally thousands of translations...in dozens of languages' (2) are a fundamental but understudied part of this phenomenon. Long treated like a poor cousin or mere handmaiden in literary studies, translation has only relatively recently begun to attract specialist research, and the few book-length studies of Virgilian translation so far have focussed on particular periods and languages. Braund herself is currently preparing *A Cultural History of Translations of Virgil: From the Twelfth Century to the Present*, which promises to take a more panoramic view; in the meantime this welcome volume scans the field, seeking 'to get the conversation moving'. Twenty-nine essays discuss translations spanning two millennia, thirteen languages (including Turkish, Chinese and Esperanto) and four continents, with diverse critical approaches. Some unevenness is to be expected in a collection of this size and scope, but every reader will discover interesting and unfamiliar things here, and there are some jewels. Space forces me to comment selectively.

The temporal and geographical range affords fascinating glimpses of how Virgilian translation has been shaped by local forces in different societies, and the cultural role it has played within them. Especially illuminating on the social, cultural and political contexts of the translations they discuss are: Richard H. Armstrong on the intermingled reception of Dante and Virgil in the cultural melting-pot of multilingual mediaeval Spain (ch. 2); Stephen Scully on the political considerations leading Dryden to concentrate on Virgil, despite his greater affinity with Homer (ch. 18); Sophia Papaioannou on Catherine the Great's ambition to recreate the Byzantine empire as the context of Voulgaris' translation into ancient Greek (ch. 10); Marko Marinčič on the contest of nativist ideology and Romantic internationalism behind Šubic's translation of the *Georgics* for the 'slightly cultured farmer' of nineteenth-century Slovenia (ch. 11); and Ulrich Eigler on linguistic politics and Virgil's role as 'national poet' in Italy post-unification and through Fascism (ch. 26), throwing the radicalism of the Marxist Pasolini's *Aeneid* I translation into relief.

Eigler contributes another excellent chapter (ch. 24), on the 'spell' cast by Voß and Goethe over the German academy, making 'extremely literal hexameter translation' (365) into archaizing language an ideal still sought even at the expense of intelligibility. Where a translator

stands on the spectrum between ‘fidelity’ to the original and accommodation to the modern reader (often referred to as ‘foreignizing’ and ‘domesticating’ translation) is a recurrent concern. Torlone also charts the perils of excessive foreignizing in her discussion of Russian translations of *Aeneid* 2 (ch. 22), while Séverine Clément-Tarantino’s comparison of modern French *Aeneids* (ch. 14) eloquently defends the aesthetic effects – including obscurity and difficulty – which Perret’s poetic prose preserves, and Veyne’s domesticating, ‘novelistic’ approach threatens to iron out. With similar sensitivity, Richard F. Thomas (ch. 16) examines the strategies by which a range of English translators have attempted to reflect such ‘language-specific stylistic... features’ (239) as anagrams and acrostics, sound-effects and rhetorical *schema*. Resonating with this chapter is Paulo Sérgio de Vasconcellos’ account (ch. 23) of the nineteenth-century Brazilian Odorico Mendes’ ‘poetic re-creation of Virgil’ (354), which strives to preserve the effect of ‘surprising and unusual images’, to echo sound and rhythm, and to create ‘poetic effects... analogous to those of the original’. De Vasconcellos reveals (accrediting his students) a beautiful flourish exemplifying Mendes’ combination of Virgilian technique and independent creativity in his translation of *Aeneid* 12.950, *No peito AQUILHE ESconde o iroso ferro*: Achilles’ name is discovered as a cryptogram buried at the heart of the line, at the very moment when Aeneas, hiding his sword in Turnus’ breast, is at his most Achillean.

Another feature these authors note in Perret and Mendes is their engagement with pre- and post-Virgilian literature. While a purpose is served by focussing on translation as a separate object of study, it is ultimately inextricable from wider literary history, and some of the best essays here are coloured by their authors’ deep familiarity with literary tradition across a broad temporal range. Gordon Braden’s discussion of changing attitudes to Dido’s passion in early modern English translations of *Aeneid* 4 (ch. 5), while achieving precision from a focus on selected passages (we see, for instance, how Dido’s *culpa* at 172 fluctuates between mild ‘fault’ and harsh ‘crime’ or ‘shame’), is always cognizant of the literary hinterland beyond translation, from Boccaccio’s chaste Dido who never met Aeneas and Chaucer’s sympathetic victim of her lover’s ‘untrouthe’, to the association of Dido’s insomnia with poetic inspiration, which Braden discerns in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* and traces to Milton’s meditation on his blindness in *Paradise Lost* 3. Similarly sure-footed across wide terrain, Philip Hardie’s rewarding chapter on Wordsworth’s translation of *Aeneid* 1–3 (ch. 21) leaves the critical landscape changed behind it. The translation is little known, partly because Wordsworth is commonly seen as turning away from neoclassicism ‘to a romanticism that draws its strength from a direct encounter with nature, not art’, but Hardie argues that ‘Wordsworth’s debt to Latin poetry is deep-rooted and continuous over his career’ (319). Revealing the care and sensitivity with which Wordsworth

responds to Virgil's style, the essay also illuminates his engagement not only with earlier translations but also with wider Virgilian reception, offering valuable observations on Wordsworth's relation to Dryden and Milton, and on Milton's to Virgil.

The volume closes with contributions from two modern translators of Virgil, occupying different positions on the spectrum of foreignization and domestication, freedom and fidelity. Alessandro Fo's 'Limiting Our Losses' (ch. 28) meticulously explains how his 2012 *Aeneid* translation works to preserve details of Virgil's style, movingly conveying the 'huge responsibility' felt by the translator who, in an age of declining Latinity, 'wishes to save as much as is possible...for the readers' appreciation' (420). Josephine Balmer's afterword, 'Let Go Fear: Future Virgils', meanwhile, contrasts a feminist reception of Virgil, evident in poetry giving his female characters new voice and agency, with a persisting 'reticence' in female translators. The *Aeneid*, 'an alpha male text of war,... patriotic fervour and patriarchal state' (425), is 'ripe for destabilization', Balmer argues. Tracing her own subversion of martial imagery and gender-roles in repeated reworkings of *Aeneid* 2, she calls on women translators to liberate Virgil from 'the student's reverence' and 'the translator's modesty' (429).

In her remarks about 'reticence', Balmer has Sarah Ruden specifically in mind. Several contributors praise Ruden's 2008 translation; Braund, citing Ruden's description of her 'devotion' to an author she 'did not love' as 'an arranged marriage', suggests that Ruden's gender may increase her capacity for a 'self-effacement' ideal in translators (121). For Balmer, such 'self-effacement' descends in a direct line from the humility enforced on early-modern women writers, grudgingly admitted in the ancillary role of translator to the male-dominated world of letters. One such translator, Marie de Gournay, receives a welcome rehabilitation in this volume: Fiona Cox (ch. 6) shows how de Gournay's posture of humility before the male elite of seventeenth-century Paris masks an Amazonian boldness, revealed in the motto appended to her *Aeneid* 2 translation, *audetque viris concurrere Virgo*. To support Cox's effort to restore de Gournay's reputation, however, an error must be corrected. De Gournay does *not* 'betray her lack of a classical education' (105) by calling *infandum dolorem* 'un plurale': Cox has mistranscribed the gloss, which has 'un phrase' in all editions.

An anglophone volume on translation from Latin into many languages must consider how to present English-language versions of quoted material. Solutions employed here cause occasional problems. The choice of default English translation for Virgilian passages (and one wonders whether the likely readership actually needs them) is sometimes unfortunate: e.g. Michael Paschalis gives Kline's translation of *Geo.* 4.485–502, which has Orpheus walking behind Eurydice (145); Papaioannou praises Voulgaris for keeping the adjective with the right noun

when translating *altae moenia Romae* (*Aen.* 1.7), but gives West's translation ('the high walls of Rome'), which does not (161–2). The editors proposed, but did not impose on contributors, 'an innovative method of interlinear translation', with English translation following the original word order exactly, hyphenation indicating two English words corresponding to a single word in the translated text (so French *du* becomes English 'of-the'). Where the method is used (which is not often), its disadvantages seem to outweigh any advantages. English grammar and syntax is scrambled, some contributors resorting to parenthetical indications of case ('[NOM.]', '[ACC.]') to unscramble it, some adding *another* translation following the passage (occasionally altering diction as well as word-order: 102–3). Where Virgil's original plus default translation are also supplied, the proliferation can become confusing. Where the language translated has less flexible word-order than Latin, the purpose served is unclear. Placing adjectives after nouns in romance languages, for instance, is normal, not a rhetorical device. Most readers, knowing this, will not speculate vainly about the poet's intended effect. But I suspect many will, like myself, lack the ability to distinguish grammatical necessity from artful disposition in Russian and Turkish, unless the contributor explicitly discusses the instance (thus obviating the need for the interlinear translation). But this minor cavil should not be taken to detract from a valuable volume, which promises to open a very interesting conversation indeed.

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