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Reynolds, Matthew. *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer and Petrarch to Homer and Logue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. x, 374. \$99.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-960571-2. . .

Reviewed by:

José C. Baracat Jr.
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
baracatjr@hotmail.com

Reynolds' study is, above anything else, a superb lesson on how to read poetry, be it translation or not. Throughout this wide-ranging book, which defies the reviewer's concision, he offers observant, sensitive analyses of poems as he unveils the elements of intertextuality, rhythm, sound, and meaning present in them.

The book is not meant primarily for medievalists or classicists, since it deals with translations of some ancient and medieval poets into the English language, so that its core is actually Anglo-American poetry from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. Amongst them are such poems as Dryden's *Aeneis*, Pope's *Iliad*, Logue's Homer, FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat*, and Golding's *Metamorphoses*. To give the reader a vague idea of the vastness of topics in the book, one should yet cite Sappho, Theocritus, Stesichoros, *Beowulf*, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Dante on the side of the source texts, and Chapman, Behn, Denham, Richard Duke, Swinburne, Addison, Byron, Pound, Anne Carson, and Seamus Heaney on the side of the translators--and also early translations of the Bible, the only prose text discussed.

The author's concern is not exactly the mere translation of poetry, but a certain "creative interaction" between the source poem and the way it is translated, an interaction which produces texts that have "a particular aesthetic charge, and which--for that reason--subject the idea of 'translation' to especially vigorous redefinition" (7). This is precisely what Reynolds calls the "poetry of translation." One could think of a study of "free" (versus "literal") translation of poetry, of imitation, "re-creation," or "trans-creation," but these notions are inaccurate and do not necessarily comprise the "creative interaction" which interests Reynolds. His notion of the "poetry of translation" occurs in the contexts in which the poet-translator sees the poet-translated as a double and in which the act of translation is guided by a metaphor that defines it and that emerges out of the text that is being translated. "All translations are guided by metaphors," as the author puts it, but "to grasp these metaphors is to abandon the old binaries of 'free,' 'literal,' etc.," for "only in some translations do the metaphors of translation interact with doubles in the source text in such a way that the poetry of translation flowers" (304). The poetry of translation is, therefore, a sporadic phenomenon, translation only creating the conditions for its apparition, but not guaranteeing it.

The book comprises five large parts divided into twenty-five short sections. The first part (sections 1-7) is theoretical: Reynolds reviews some accounts of translation and explains why such accounts are not sufficient or adequate for the phenomenon of the poetry of translation, shaping at the same his notion of translatory metaphor. These chapters are not a comprehensive study of theory of translation--nor are they intended to be--but they are, on the one hand, indispensable for the author's clarification of his own method and, on the other, extremely useful for many of us, who translate (not necessarily poetry) instinctually but are not acquainted with theories of translation.

The remaining eighteen sections, or four parts, are essentially case studies that give Reynolds the opportunity of developing and specifying his concept of the poetry of translation as he discusses them in order to bring to surface the metaphor that guides the translation under analysis. Each of the parts group together analyses of related translatory metaphors. Thus, the second part (sections 8-13) deals with translations guided by the metaphors of "interpretation," "paraphrase," and "opening"--Dryden is the prominent author in this part, but Chapman and early translations of the Bible are discussed too. The third part (sections 14-19) is dedicated to the metaphors of translation as "friendship," "desire," and "passion"--Reynolds addresses a multitude of poets here, but Byron's translations of Italian poets such as Dante and Pulci, and Pope's *Iliad* receive more detailed analyses. The fourth part considers translation as providing a landscape of the past--Pope's *Iliad* figures here again, as well as Logue's Homer, but also shorter treatments of Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Longley, Anne Carson's Stesichoros, and Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*. The fifth and final part considers translations conducted by the metaphors of "loss," "death," "resurrection," and "metamorphosis"--for example, Pound's many translations of many poets such as Cavalcanti, Propertius, and Chinese poetry, FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat*, and Golding's *Metamorphoses*.

The conveyance of the metaphor or metaphors guiding the translations studied is not only effective to the author's masterful analyses, but also constitutes an original contribution to the theory of translation.

The translatory metaphors are sufficiently self-explanatory, I think. It must be remarked, however, that the way Reynolds finds them guiding the translations and employs them to explicit the creative interaction mentioned above is amazing. For the metaphors do not come out from his subjective reading of the poem-translations: Reynolds scrutinizes the translators' prefaces and notes to their translations, their letters, journals, essays, and interviews as well, in order to draw the translatory metaphors from the translators' own reflections on the translatory practice and then to apply them to the reading of the poems-translations themselves. It is interesting and very elucidating, for instance, to learn the background polemics between classical scholars and

Erza Pound, whose "job was to bring a dead man to life, to present a living figure," on the occasion of the publication of his translations of Propertius (256-9). Pound pushed against what had become established by scholars as a proper knowledge of Latin--"as for my service to classical scholarship, presumably nil, I shall be quite content if I induce a few Latinists really to look at the text of Propertius instead of swallowing an official 'position' and then finding what the textbooks tell them to find" (259).

Christopher Logue's fabulous renditions of Homer are a particularly good example of the efficiency of reading the poem-translations through translatory metaphors. It is well known that Logue did not know Greek and that he built his work from other English translations of Homer. Logue's texts are so "free" and, academically speaking, "distant" from the original that he himself calls them, not "translations", but "accounts" of Homer. If we stick to the usual distinction of translations as "free" or "literal", for instance, we will put in the same basket very different "free" translations, so that we will miss the specific motivation, practice, and results of each translator.

Logue's accounts of Homer are guided by the metaphor of "epic zoom," as Reynolds calls it. Indeed, Logue had an almost "documentary approach," "intensified by his use of cinematic techniques." [1] Just read a brief excerpt from an interview with Logue:

Logue: "It's nearly all close ups. There's a few in the middle distance, and one or two panoramic views, but not many in so long a work." Question: "Whereas you do a lot of panoramic shots."

Logue: "Yes, I do, and I want to vary them all the time." [2]

And now the beginning of his *War Music*, where we find first a panoramic view and then the zoom:

Picture the east Aegean sea by night, And on a beach aslant its shimmering Upwards of 50,000 men Asleep like spoons beside their lethal Fleet. Now look along that beach and see Between the keels hatching its western dunes...

These excerpts are nothing but a sample of the material upon which Reynolds builds the analyses in his book, which will certainly be appreciated by any person interested in poetry and translation.

I would like to observe that I found a number of editorial errors--not copious or grave enough to displease the reader, but unusual in Oxford books and which might be corrected in a deserved second edition of the book. For example:

p. 40: semicolon instead of comma: "...FitzGerald has had, he says; to break the bounds..."

p. 77: Greek words without accentuation: "ἐκκλησια," "πρεσβυτερ"--and see also p. 136, where οὐκέτι receives an accent instead of spirit

p. 89: missing comma: "...Chaucer, a poet who, he said 'resembled' Ovid..."

p. 93: misspellings: "consequences"

pp. 239-240: a reference to Browning's *The Ring and the Book* points to Chapter 20, but there is no mention of Browning there.

Notes:

1. In the words of L. Hardwick, "'Shards and suckers': contemporary receptions of Homer," in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. R. Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 347.

2. "The Shortest Long Poem Ever Written: an interview with Christopher Logue," *Areté* 13 (2003), 126; quoted in Reynolds, 225.