

BOOK REVIEW

Roman Theories of Translation: Surpassing the Source. By SIOBHÁN MCELDUFF. New York and London: Routledge, 2013. Pp. ix + 266. Hardcover, \$120.00. ISBN 978-0-415-81676-2.

In recent years we have witnessed a growing interest in studies on classical translation, the vast majority of which are concerned with earlier and modern renderings of Greek and Latin literature. McElduff's book takes a different turn by setting out to examine the origins of translation theory in the Roman world. This is a most welcome study, which fills in gaps in modern theory and provides the reader with much needed information about how the Romans theorised translation. Having in mind non-specialists, McElduff makes sure to contextualise, both culturally and historically, the authors and texts she discusses. By virtue of bringing together earlier results in various areas of Latin literature, but also thanks to its making new points, this study will be useful to all those interested in Latin translation as well as the origins of translation theory in the Roman world. The book, written in clear though sometimes dense prose style, comprises an Introduction, six chapters covering the period from Archaic Latin down to Augustan literature, and a less-than-one-page Conclusion; plus an Appendix on Roman Terminology for Translation, Endnotes, and a brief Index. For all Latin texts quoted a translation is provided.

In the Introduction, McElduff lays out the general directions of her study: it is mostly concerned with Roman theories about translation, as these ideas unfold mainly in prologues, prefaces, and comments in various pieces of literature. Unlike most works of earlier scholarship which focused on "philological" readings, i.e. descriptive analyses, of Latin translations, McElduff is interested in exploring the Roman modes of translation from the perspective of cultural politics and control, as well as of language management and historical milieu. In pointing out the particularities of ancient reading practices, she draws a firm line between the Latin concept of faithfulness in translation and its modern application, stressing that the latter can rarely be used in Roman times.

Although McElduff clearly states that the core of her study lies in literary and elite translation, Chapter 1, by way of introduction, is devoted to non-literary

translation in the Roman world, covering a variety of related areas, some of which are in line with topics discussed in the rest of the book. These fields include bilingualism and multilingualism, the imposition of Latin over languages other than Greek, the knowledge of Greek as a marker of Roman elite identity, the politics surrounding official interpretations, and the reliability of interpreters. Despite the varied nature of non-literary translation in the Roman world, ranging from randomly selected interpreters in the provinces to the official translations of the *senatus consulta*, McElduff demonstrates that the Romans employed translation as a political tool to exercise power over the peoples they conquered (including the Greeks).

The rest of the volume (Chapters 2 to 6) covers a rather vast period, i.e. from the dawn of Latin literature in the 3rd century BCE down to the Imperial period in the 2nd century AD. The discussion rightfully starts with the emblematic case of Livius Andronicus' work (Chapter 2), which explored unknown territory and served as a model for Roman translation. Particularly illuminating is the examination of Livius' use of the saturnian meter in rendering the Homeric hexameter as a means to Romanize a previously non-Latin genre.

Domestication is a particular area of concern in Chapter 3 too, which considers translation theory in comedy (Plautus and Terence)—also from the perspective of power and control over the source text. But it was certainly with Cicero (Chapter 4) that translation (theory) reached an unprecedented climax in Roman times, and even more than before it became an act in the service of the public, with the intention to infuse Latin culture with Greek thinking. In this immense undertaking he succeeded not by producing literal translations but instead by conveying the sense of the text; here McElduff rightly objects to the modern reading of the famous Ciceronian distinction between the translating practices of the *interpres* and that of the *orator* as a literal (word-for-word) and dynamic translation respectively—since this interpretation downplays particularities of Roman translation at large.

Cicero's influence can be observed in Late Republican and Augustan poets (Chapter 5), in particular Parthenius of Nicaea, Catullus, Horace, Lucretius, and Germanicus. Here again the creative process in which the Romans dealt with Greek literature becomes all too obvious: in their attempts to transfer elements of the Greek lyric tradition, they produced accommodating adaptations and renderings of the original focusing on contemporary readership. Finally, Chapter 6 explores the evolution of translation theory in post-Ciceronian prose authors (mainly the two Senecas, Quintilian, Pliny, and Gellius); these may not present a

picture as unified as before but the main themes remain the same and relate to the importance of Greek, both in enriching Latin culture and in providing a symbol for Roman aristocracy.

Among the strengths of this study are the extensive discussions throughout the book (and in summary in the Appendix) of the terms used by the Romans to indicate the act of translation, which reveal that the field is not as clear-cut as modern theory would like us to believe. Although in certain authors (particularly Cicero and the lyric poets) the examination would benefit from, at least some, comprehensive comparisons with the Greek original, McElduff's monograph succeeds in mapping out the theories of Roman translation—also by engaging with trends in translation studies and by making broader references to the Roman reception of Greek literature.

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