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Cover: see Fischer, this volume, p. 82, *Fig. 15*.

S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Living Classics. Greece and Rome in Contemporary Poetry in English (Classical Presences)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009. 346 pp., 1 fig. ISBN 978-0-19-923373-1.

It is somewhat of a paradox that in today's climate, which sees the effective knowledge of the classical languages decreasing, that poets and authors (especially in the Anglophone world) show an ever growing interest for the ancient authors as starting points for their own work. The texts in this volume, 17 chapters in total divided into three sections, portray this interest from two perspectives; the subjective reflections of the poet translating or re-creating the classics for a modern audience, and the scholarly analysis of the same process.

The first two sections feature contributions from contemporary poets and authors working with translations of classical poetry or stage drama, Greek as well as Latin. The first part 'Poets and Practice' examines modern poetry founded on the images of the classical world, as presented by the poets themselves. In Chapter 1 'Horace on Teesside', Maureen Almond (1945–) narrates the process of her repositioning of the Epodes of Horace, in themselves a sort of narrative of his own life in the year 30 BC, into autobiographical comments on her own childhood in Teesside, North East England. In the following chapter, 'Jumping the bones: Translating, Transgressing and Creating', Josephine Balmer (1959–) discusses the possibility of modern poets shedding new light on Classical texts through modernist verse and the creation of new pieces of poetry, as she has done herself with fragments by for example Sappho, Corinna, and also Catullus. Balmer also mentions the possibility offered in the rendering of classical texts to step away from oneself and write about topics that might be too painful to place in one's own proximity, such as the death of a child. In Chapter 3, 'Reconnecting with the Classics', the Scottish poet Robert Crawford (1959–) examines the idea that new translations of Classical poets, as exemplified by those on Sappho and Alcman, may produce very different solutions from the poetic notion of the poems, depending on how the translator approaches aspects such as rhythm and cadence. Catullus re-emerges in the fourth chapter, 'Catullus in the Playground', in which New Zealand poet Anna Jackson (1967–) tells of her translations of the Roman verses into a language aimed at younger readers, for her third collection of poems, *Catullus for Children* (2003). The section ends with the chapter 'Lapsed Classicist', in which Irish poet Michael Longley (1939–) reflects on his own long-lasting infatuation with the Homeric epics. Several times, Longley writes, has he found himself acting as the "mouthpiece" of Homer, in re-telling the Homeric images for a modern society which is itself seeing the very same kind of human conflicts and sacrifice.

The second part of the book, *Poets in the Theatre*, consists of two chapters only: 'Weeping for Hecuba' by Tony Harrison (1937–), and 'Title Deeds: Translating a Classic' by Seamus Heaney (1939–). Both chapters focus on the role of ancient drama in the modern world, exploring the very poignant function these classical texts may have in a contemporary political climate. Harrison's text is more remote from the poetic process itself, in that his concern is with Euripides' two plays *The Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, and the image of the Trojan queen as the tragic epitome of a woman who, at the end of a war fought by men and in which she herself has had no active part, loses everything. Heaney instead analyzes his own translation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Over the last century, Heaney explains, the play has had a significant impact on its audiences in the context of the on-going political turmoil of Northern Ireland, and it is now more a pretext for debate than a mere text from a theatrical repertoire.

The third part 'Scholars on Poets' is the longest section of the volume with ten chapters. The first three chapters focus on Northern Ireland and the classical influence in the works of Longley and Heaney. Longley is the poet most prominently studied, in both Chapter 8 'The Argippaei (Herodotus 4.23) in Belfast' by Maureen Alden, and Chapter 9 'Michael Longley Appropriates Latin Poetry' by Brian Arkins. In the following chapter 'The Homeric Convergences and Divergences of Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley', Oliver Taplin compares the habit of both poets in borrowing from Homer, in more or less synchronic works though in a far from symmetrical way. In Chapter 11 'Is "the Frail Silken Line" Worth more than "a Fart in a Bearskin"? or, how Translation Practice Matters in Poetry and Drama', Lorna Hardwick contributes a more theoretical discussion on classical translations, exemplified through the works of already cited Longley, along with his fellow Irishman and dramatist Brian Friel (1929–). The influence of Greek dramatists on women's poetry is discussed by Anastasia Bakogianni in Chapter 12 'Electra in Sylvia Plath's *Poetry: A Case of Identification*', and the history and nature of Western perception of the Self becomes the focus of Chapter 13 'The Autobiography of the Western Subject: Carson's *Geryon*' by Edith Hall, on the Canadian poet Anne Carson's novel *Autobiography of Red*. In Chapter 14 '"Purple Shining Lilies": Imagining the Aeneid in Contemporary Poetry', Rowena Fowler considers different levels of identification with Virgilian motifs in the works of several contemporary poets and authors, mostly Irish and British. In Chapter 15 'Shades of Rome in the Poetry of Derek Walcott' Emily Greenwood analyses the Classical origins in the poems of the Caribbean poet. She connects his playful use of Latin words in the midst of Creole expressions with the poet's fellow Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney, and his dialogue which contains contemporary Irish. In "We'll all be Penelopes

then": Art and Domesticity in American Women's Poetry, 1958–1996; Isobel Hurst discusses the changing perspective and creative freedom of American women poets during the last decades of the 20th century, in the alternating applications of the image of Penelope at her loom. In the last chapter 'Catullus in New Zealand' Stephen Harrison, who is the editor of the volume, reflects on the position of the Latin poet in the works of Kiwi poets James K. Baxter (1926–1972) and C. Karl Stead (1932–), finding in Baxter a tendency to further explain the Latin original and a tendency to provide an ironic and critical sidelight on the contemporary New Zealand literary context in Stead.

Throughout its various sections the volume combines the introvert reflections of the creating poet with the academic distancing evaluation of the process and its result. The various contributing poets come from divergent backgrounds and thus add different reflections on the classical texts on which they based their compositions. Both Almond (Ch. 1) and Jackson (Ch. 4) confess to not knowing Latin or Greek, and take scholarly translations as starting points for their new renderings of the classical works. The remaining poets, especially Longley (Ch. 5) and Heaney (Ch. 7), instead reminisce on their own early schooling in the ancient authors, and make critical choices between alternative readings in their interpretational and creative work. These divergent backgrounds are, however, not that scattered when it comes to the global perspective. In the introduction, Harrison advertises the collection of essays as an "eclectic account" (p.1) of contemporary poetic engagement with the literature of Greece and Rome. Given that most contributors come from a British context, the volume presents an assortment of chapters dealing with poetry from the British Isles, with a rather pronounced focus on Northern Ireland through the repetitive mention of Longley and Heaney. The poetry of both New Zealand and North America is represented, but the post-colonial perspective is breached only through Wilcott (Ch. 15). Most of the poets invited to contribute or analyzed by scholars were born in the first half of the last century (pre-1950s), the youngest voice heard being that of Anna Jackson (1967–).

The volume as a whole thus combines several very different perspectives, gathered under the umbrella of the problem of translation, and the conscious deliberations of the translating poet become the starting point for a varied and thought-provoking insight into the creative process as such. Several contributors stress the point that any translator will, almost as a force majeure, take up a medial path between the role of the mediator (by re-locating the classical texts in a modern perspective) and the innovator, by adding her/his subjective views of and on the material itself.

Several of the chapters in the first two sections of the volume concern the question as to whether one, as a translating

poet, should remain faithful to the original or aim at differentiation and/or appropriation of the material for one's own subjective needs. The scholarly discussion in the third section aims at establishing a platform from which this triple perspective can be effectively analyzed, that of the original poem, the modern poet re-working it, and the modern reader meeting the contemporarily generated version.

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B. Santillo Frizell, *LANA, CARNE, LATTE. Paesaggi pastorali tra mito e realtà*, Mauro Pagliai Editore, Firenze 2010, ISBN 978-88-564-0095-3

Lana, carne, latte. Paesaggi pastorali tra mito e realtà non è semplicemente una guida alla conoscenza e alla fruizione consapevole di quanto resta del paesaggio pastorale ma si impone, oltre le intenzioni dell'autrice, come un saggio che trova degna collocazione tra le opere che trattano di storia dell'economia rurale.² E va a colmare le non poche lacune riscontrabili negli studi storici, che solitamente si sono concentrati sulla cultura egemone, demandando a discipline considerate "minori" l'analisi delle manifestazioni della cultura materiale delle classi subalterne. L'editore Pagliai, consapevole dei pregi dell'opera, ne valorizza l'aspetto divulgativo inserendolo nella collana "Storie del mondo".

Ciò che maggiormente colpisce il lettore, oltre la ricchezza della documentazione e dei confronti storici ed etnografici, è l'approccio "compartecipante" per cui l'autrice si compiace del proprio coinvolgimento nei contesti che osserva: un metodo mutuato dalla ricerca sociologica ma anche un atteggiamento che potremmo definire "nordico", non tanto per l'accostamento fin troppo scontato allo stato d'animo dei viaggiatori ottocenteschi, quanto per la vena autenticamente romantica che sgorga dalle pagine. D'altra parte per l'autrice lo studio del pastoralismo e degli usi, costumi e tradizioni connessi è diventato quasi una ragione di vita, a partire dai primi anni novanta del secolo scorso con il rapporto sul progetto pilota *Per itinera callium*, pubblicato nel 1996 in *Opuscula Romana*, per giungere, attraverso una nutrita bibliografia, a *Lana, carne, latte*.

² E. Sereni, *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano*, Bari 1971; M. Bloch, *I caratteri originali della storia rurale francese*, Torino 1973; C. Cattaneo, *Saggi di economia rurale*, Torino 1975; F. Braudel, *Civiltà materiale, economia e capitalismo*, Torino 1987.