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Annamarie Drury, *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Hardback. Pp. viii + 293. £64.99

Early in Annmarie Drury's detailed study of Victorian translation, she contends that 'we must understand Victorian translation to understand Victorian poetry' (p. 3). This important assertion gains in significance in light, for example, of Thomas Herbert Warren's conception (published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1895) that, 'poetry is the key site for negotiating literary encounters with the world' (p. 32). In grappling to translate non-English writing into the metres and idiom of English poetry, the Victorian writers studied here were engaged in highly wrought navigations both of unfamiliar territory and of the complex, reflexive vehicles of verse. The implications were as important to the 'host' culture as they were for the translated text: Drury's study sets itself the task of 'elucidat[ing] how metaphor, meter, form and tone in [Victorian] poetry are influenced by a complex impulse to incorporate foreignness' (p. 8).

The exciting questions of how Anglophone poets participated in the highly contested, politically-charged territory of encounter, assimilation, and confrontation of this Imperial period are potentially legion, but this study focuses on scholarly, academic questions of literary technique: this is a study that engagingly focuses on the judicious deployment of the apostrophe (p. 119) rather than the broad and arresting questions that form the off stage but still potent contexts for these decisions. Long passages of this book are given over to intricate close readings of poetry by Tennyson and Browning, quite careful and illuminating in themselves, but possibly of limited interest to the reader looking for the work of culture. Drury only touches briefly on the effects of significantly changing readerships for periodicals (p. 34), on the cultures of collecting (pp. 4-6), or the exporting of the English education system (p. 164) for example.

Carefully situating her book within Victorian poetry studies (Drury works in the wake of Meredith Martin and Jason Rudy) and acknowledging but distinguishing it from Matthew Reynolds and Joe Phelan's considerations of the colonial implications of translation, *Translation as Transformation* dedicates chapters to translation in Victorian journalism; to welcome consideration of Tennyson's use of Charlotte Guest's translation of *The Mabinogion* (1859) in his *Idylls of the King*; to Browning's 'incorporative aesthetic' (p. 102) in three poems, where the process of translation moves over into pseudo-translation, bringing with it new epistemological and hermeneutic demands upon the reader; to the magpie-like enthusiasms that form the background to Fitzgerald's 'fortunate' translations of Omar Khayyám's *Rubáiyát*; and finally to the persistence of Victorian modes of translation in the presentation of Swahili poetry to English-speaking readers in the twentieth century.

The precise deployment of micro-analysis in all of these chapters is both rewarding and frustrating. Drury's preference is for tracing the minute decisions taken at the level of metrical arrangement, line length, and 'layered lyricism' (p. 65) as Victorian poetry is seen forming and unforming itself against both direct and oblique encounter with other tongues. This directs her focus on well-known poets, whose writing and decision making is available through multiple editions, manuscripts and a vibrant reception history. She acknowledges that addressing the less well-known, but strikingly prolific, world of periodical translations is hampered by 'problems of identifying original texts and of discerning anything about the occasions and processes of translation' (p. 225), but nevertheless I would have appreciated some consideration of these compelling cross-cultural currents, especially as the poets considered here would all have been reading these periodical-published translations and presumably were seeing reviews of their work alongside them. The glimpse we have on p.

133 of Browning excited by the possibility of creating a translation of the *Agamemnon* illustrated by photographs of the mid-1870s excavations at Mycenae, as reported in *The*

Times, for example, compellingly brings translation into dialogue not only with material culture, but also with other forms of cross-cultural transmission (ekphrasis, illustration).

Drury's studiousness acts as a slight curb on the humour of American parodies of Fitzgerald, and while her proposal that the process of translation, with its inevitable incorporation of polyphony, does interesting things to our understanding of the establishment of lyric voice in Victorian poetry is absorbing (her reading of 'Caliban Upon Setebos' contributes quite subtle richness to this specialized debate), there are moments when diversions into the lyrical strategies of Michael Field (which have already received considerable critical scrutiny) feels a little distracting as the important field of Victorian translation itself recedes to the edges of consideration. Indeed, in general the book's (albeit careful, often thoughtful) attention to individual trees does threaten to obscure our view of the complex, pervasive wood of inter-cultural, colonial negotiation of which translation was a part in this fevered period. Just two essays, published fifty years apart, are given sustained attention in the chapter on periodical publishing, for example, and the editorial line of the journals is not evaluated.

By the end, we are well versed in the thesis that in reading and measuring Victorian translations we are feeling for 'assimilation into English poetry of the un-homelike – of the foreign, the strange, the morally unsettling, the *unheimlich* – where it may exist side by side with a more conventionally idyllic poem' (p. 144) and that, forming a species of *ars poetica*, many translations seek to forge 'a mutually reinforcing relationship between the method of the translator and the theme of the poem' (p. 152). This is seen in Fitzgerald's notion of successful translation as the lucky happenstance of the not too bothered, or in Drury's identification of Geraint's ill treatment of his wife Enid in *The Idylls of the King* as a figuration of Tennyson's steady erasure of Welshness from his Anglicized poem. Translation, as Drury traces it, is evidently about domesticating strangeness (or about troubling that expectation), and it is usually culturally strategic, even if guilelessly so. (I would have liked to hear more about the striking suggestion that it is Browning's 'dissenting background' that directs his provocative Classicism (p. 146).) It therefore seems a little odd that the book's final chapter on colonial administrator William Hichens' translations of Swahili poetry in the 1930s holds back from connecting to Meredith Martin's arresting work (in *The Rise and Fall of Meter*) on the cultural implications of drilling metrical regularity into English schoolboys in the preceding decades. Drawing on Martin's thesis would have helped Drury's readers understand the ideological heft of Hichens' 'sheets and sheets of scansion' notes (p. 212) and made sense of what may be unremarkable in literary terms, but holds significance for our appreciation of how colonial administration deployed cultural as well as bureaucratic and military strategy in its negotiations abroad.

While Drury's study is perhaps more reticent than we would expect on the ways in which the Victorian reading public was induced to encounter foreignness, in terms of interrogating how the metrical and lyrical strategies of Victorian poetry owe significant debt to the process and procedure of translation, Drury's book is a welcome addition to our resources for understanding the multi-layered negotiation constituted in that hybrid form, the Anglophone lyric.