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The rubric of a collection entitled *The Classics in Modernist Translation* is bound to include genetic and philological approaches (attending with welcome rigour and expert nuance to modernist craft and empowering its close readers), as well as contextual and comparative perspectives (adding significant detail and suggestive parallels to our understanding of the discrete personal and political agenda of modernist engagements with the classics). This important volume delivers amply on both counts.

Part I, the section on Ezra Pound as modernist translation's *miglior fabbro* showcases the critical rewards afforded by the patient tracing of the choices and procedures of his translation practice across a range of early and later work – from *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* and its 'prosodic provocations', as Demetres Tryphonopoulos and Sara Dunton put it, to *The Cantos*, treated by George Varsos as the site *par excellence* for tracing Pound's strategies of 'transpos[ing] the challenge of ancient foreign languages into the literary dynamics of the modernist premises' (p. 24), and by Massimo Cè as the stage for Pound's productive agonistic encounter with Homer's authority through recourse to Latinate and Saxonist literary layers. Michael Coyle's respondent essay on 'Poundian Translation and Poetic Music' underscores the materiality and musicality of Pound's poetic practice which he sees as a core result, rather than a mere side effect, of his work as a translator. Indeed, given his life-long (some might say even life-saving) commitment to the discipline of rendering and resuscitating the enduring ancient element, the section devoted to Pound would have been stronger (and in a sense more supportive of the volume's claims for the formal and political significance of the classical translation mode for the modernist project) had

there been an essay on his extraordinary *Elektra* (1949) and *Women of Trachis* (1954), crowning achievements in their own right, and a test case for the productive and poignant ambivalence at the heart of Pound's modernity: no other works mined Pound's reverence for the Greek language with such consideration for its resonance, making it strikingly relevant (and new) in the process.

H.D.'s translations of Euripides constitute the topic of Part II. Across the four essays dealing variously with the mythopoetic, feminist, palimpsestic, gestural dimensions of her deep engagement with Euripides's work, H.D. appears as a committed modern Hellenist with a consistent vision and a bespoke technical repertoire to match. For Anna Fyta, in a reading of *Helen in Egypt*, H.D. 'reaches beyond the restorative, corrective aims of Euripides' to create with that long poem effectively a 'meta-palinode' (p. 65). Fyta doesn't comment on H.D.'s misspelling of the term 'palinode' [παλινωδία] in the title of one of the poem's sections and in the poet's commentary on the work. Given the importance of the word for the literary gesture H.D. revisits so self-consciously and strategically, her etymologically inaccurate 'Pallinode' might have merited a brief reflection. The error is probably an honest one (revealing the fitful nature of her Greek, as well as the non-specialist context in which the work was published and received), unless in a tantalising, though unlikely, Joycean light one might treat it as a portmanteau word, fusing the prefix 'πάλιν' with 'Παλλάς', the goddess Athene's maiden name. Either way, as Jeff Westover and Miranda Hickman and Lynn Kozak suggest in their essays on H.D.'s *Ion* and *Hippolytus* respectively, translation was the training ground for the programmatic reconceptualization of mythical topoi and attendant psychological modes which preoccupied the poet so deeply, and which she invoked persistently in the elaboration of her mystical feminist vision. To what extent this transformative mythopoetic vision, with translation at its core, can be safely called 'modernist', is briefly touched upon by Catherine Theis, in a stimulating, richly theorised essay that traces the elective affinities between H.D.'s and Robinson Jeffers's

‘Euripidean landscapes’. This doesn’t go as far as Carrie J. Preston, who places H.D. within an ‘antimodern genealogy’ in her otherwise compelling *Modernism’s Mythic Pose: Gender, Genre, Solo Performance* (2011), opting instead for the more ambivalent ‘counter-modernist’, which she glosses in a note as ‘running alongside or adjacent to currents of traditional modernism’ (p. 225). The point remains moot, however, and is a broader one, pertaining both to translation and modernism (of the ‘counter’ or ‘traditional’ kind – though arguably these are a pleonasm and an oxymoron respectively): might the practices of classical reception by writers and artists we now deem modernist also include aspects of a fundamental ambivalence vis-à-vis the modern, a perception of precarity and incompleteness of a modern project pitted against the presumed endurance and eternal return of the ancient? The answer to such a question can only be as varied as the various aesthetic, political and institutional uses to which the classics were put in the period. Part III of the volume, the longest section yet, offers a fairly substantial set of revealing instances to that effect. The short essays on Laura Riding’s classically-themed fiction from the 1930s (Anett K. Jessop), the invocation of the Siren song in Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (Leah Flack), the ‘*transposition or re-actualization*’ of Aristophanic comedy in Eliot’s *Sweeney Agonistes* (Matthias Somers) and the Irish *Oedipus* of W.B. Yeats (Gregory Baker) that comprise this section illustrate the rich complexity of the political (in a collective and personal sense), cultural and emotional investments involved in some of the most distinctive and mutually defining encounters between modernist writing and the classical tradition. There are other emblematic cases of modernist writers whose classicizing ‘political attunements’ could have featured in such a sampler, most notably perhaps Virginia Woolf, mentioned briefly only in Nancy Worman’s respondent essay, or E. M. Forster, but the relatively selective roster does allow for some extra nuance in the treatment of figures such as Eliot, the subject of two essays here: his interest in Greek drama, ritual and ancient religion was more sustained and led to work more

hybridic and formally experimental than the dismissive accounts of the supposedly elitist allusiveness of *The Waste Land* might allow. Another commendable nuance that has resonance for the entire volume appears in Baker's fine account of the making of Yeats's Irish version of 'Sophocles' *King Oedipus*', which involved not only 'retranslating' Jebb and Verrall's English, but also Masqueray's French, a further twist that 'freed' the poet to use a 'more idiomatic English ... and rid his version of anything "that might not be intelligible on the Blasket islands"' (p. 178). The transcultural, transnational, multiply translanguagual aspect of translation in this scene is crucial for an understanding of modernism in its relation to the classics, not simply because it makes visible the layers of linguistic and cultural residue that always attend the effort of translation, but because it helps to defamiliarise further certain lingering assumptions about the aura of classical material as the distillation of a pure essence. It may be argued, in fact, that Pound's or Yeats's Greek translations are inconceivable without their non-Anglophone and non-European addressees and interlocutors, such as Kitasono Katue, the avant-garde Japanese poet to whom Pound dedicated *The Women of Trachis* (in the hope that in turn he might interest an ancient family of Noh actors in it), or Michio Ito, the Japanese dancer who inspired the 'aristocratic form' of Yeats's 'half-Greek, half-Asiatic' Cuchulain plays.<sup>1</sup> In this broader sense, translation is the necessary syncretism of any attempt to access a world 'on the far side of language', as Woolf put it in the famous essay on the impossibility of translation.<sup>2</sup> Given that difficulty of access, and the demands of a 'pushing world' (Yeats's phrase),<sup>3</sup> a strong modernist strategy might involve

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<sup>1</sup> W.B. Yeats, 'Introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* by Pound & Fenollosa', in Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* ([1917] New York: New Directions, 1959), p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> V. Woolf, 'On Not Knowing Greek', *A Woman's Essays. Selected Essays: Volume One*, ed. R. Bowlby (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Yeats, 'Introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* by Pound & Fenollosa', p. 153.

translation across eras and genres, languages and cultures; for Yeats in 1916 Europe's time had come 'to copy the East and live deliberately'.<sup>4</sup>

The programmatic uses of translation to foster cultural, political, national as well as literary renewal should by rights be at the heart of any critical overview of its relation to modernism, and the particular programme of translating the classics has a distinctive ideological and institutional value, addressed here directly and indirectly by the essays that bookend the volume. Elizabeth Vandiver's fascinating chapter on the Poets' Translation Series (edited by Richard Aldington and H.D. in 1915-16 and 1919-20), Marsha Bryant and Mary Ann Eaverly's generous sharing of innovative approaches to teaching modernism and the classics, and the Afterword by J. Alison Rosenblitt, speak to very different historical moments and approaches to modernism's classical agenda but they help underline its unresolved problematic: endlessly new creative access to the classical world (and word) may be both a necessary illusion, product of an institutionally mediated process of transmission, as well as that space of productive contestation and radical possibility through which, as H.D. put it, 'we are all free, scholar and unlettered alike, to pass' (cited by Vandiver, p. 17).

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<sup>4</sup> Yeats, 'Introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* by Pound & Fenollosa', p. 156.