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Hegel
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Hegel and/in/on Translation

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pratica riflessiva e formativa che mira ad avvicinare l'uomo alla consapevolezza delle sue possibilità e al padroneggiamento di strumenti e circostanze che da un lato lo costituiscono, dall'altra lo abilitano come soggetto morale. Sul terreno dell'educazione il pragmatismo trova una riuscita manifestazione, trattandosi dell'ambito in cui gli individui sono portati a impadronirsi di capacità utili a condizionare nuove opportunità e reali diritti, in una realtà incerta di soluzioni da costruire e risposte sempre da (ri)trovare. Proprio facendo leva sull'approccio pragmatista all'azione morale, essenzialista e perfezionista in forma debole perché volto a integrare il contingente, Quante apre, nel finale del lavoro, un riferimento alla linea di pensiero inaugurata da Amartya Sen e arricchita da Martha Nussbaum, mostrando un possibile incontro tra le sue «condizioni abilitanti» e «l'approccio materiale delle capacità» (p. 172). Una compatibilità teorica su cui varrà la pena indagare in modo più approfondito.

La lettura nel complesso è certamente impegnativa ma ha il pregio di trasmettere il senso di un'impresa ancora da svolgere e ampliare, non solo in ottica teoretica ma anche applicativa. Le raccomandazioni metodologiche del capitolo 8 orientate nel senso dell'ermeneutica critica (p. 165), di un fallibilismo caritatevole (p. 172), di uno scetticismo calibrato e dell'interdisciplinarietà (p. 166) rinviano alle molte possibilità di un'etica «in applicazione» (p. 165) che guarda alle questioni della bioetica medica, della medicina, della cura agli anziani, delle tutele del lavoro, del rapporto con le nuove tecnologie in ambito educativo e sanitario. Sono questi dopotutto alcuni dei temi di lavoro di Michael Quante, autore e studioso che, siamo sicuri, ci sarà tempo e modo, non solo a Padova, di interpellare ancora.

(Elena Alessiato)

DAVID CHARLSTON, *Translation and Hegel's Philosophy: A Transformative, Socio-narrative Approach to A.V. Miller's Cold-War Retranslations*, London-New York, Routledge, 2020, pp. 246 (ISBN: 9781138743274).

In the Preface of *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807) translated by Arnold Vincent Miller, we read Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel stating that «...ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era.

Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined and is of a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labour of its own transformation»⁵. The transformation that Hegel had in mind perhaps related to ways of investigating and conceiving of the nature of thought within a world of 1807 emerging within shifting conceptualisations of society, faith and Empire. But whichever transformations that Hegel was concerned with in his world of 1807 and in whichever ‘world/s’ Miller read Hegel’s notion of transformation at a later date, many understandings of Hegel’s thought in Anglophone contexts have been shaped by their political receptions in different times, contexts and locations via German-English translation. With this thought in mind, I was drawn to read David Charlston’s *Translation and Hegel’s Philosophy: A Transformative, Socio-narrative Approach to AV Miller’s Cold War Retranslations* from the Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies series by its very title. For while the title suggests that the book relates to the philosophy of Hegel in German-English translation, it also carries new points of critical focus: on the translation of philosophy during the Cold War era and the translator Arnold Miller as part of its politics of reception. Equally compelling are the words «a transformative socio-narrative approach» - words which imply a methodology that recalls notions of ‘transformation’ potentially relating to Hegel’s thought in his era while drawing on present-day understandings of transformation to go beyond it. After reading the title, other thoughts then crossed my mind: what will this book mean to scholars with differing understandings of Hegelian philosophy? Why is it important to revisit, or know more Miller’s English re-translations of Hegel within the context of the Cold War now?

The book is divided into nine chapters which cover various theoretical, archival and analytical approaches in relation to Miller’s re-translations of Hegel’s works during the Cold War era published between 1969 and 1986. The first part is made of the first three chapters and covers theoretical perspectives of translation used to define the parameters and theoretical scope of the book. In Chapter 1 titled «Hegel, Miller and the ‘Cold War’ Transformation of Liberal Thought», we are introduced to the overall aim of the book, which is to investigate what

⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. by A. Miller, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 6.

it means to narrate the story or stories connecting a translator, the translations and their dynamic social and political environments (p. 6) in relation to Miller's retranslation of six works by Hegel between 1969 and 1986. Chapter 2 titled «Intersectional Narratives in and of Miller's Retranslations of Hegel» expands more on what it means to draw on theoretical perspectives of socio-narrative theory in translation studies, Bourdieusian approaches and feminist analytical frameworks touching on gendered performativity – while trying to piece together intersecting narratives on Miller's retranslation of Hegel's works via archival primary sources such as letters and interviews. Charlston does not deal with 'intersectional' by using Kimberlé Crenshaw's definition of the interlocking dynamics of power of ethnicity and class intersecting that of gender⁶. Nor does he discuss intersectionality to analyse Miller's retranslations in ways which call out translation practices that reinforce dynamics supporting patriarchal norms and structures⁷ as is often the case in feminist translation studies. 'Intersectional' relates more to how we can read the dynamics of class and gender between a group of influential men (of which Miller was one, and other academic figures such as Owen Barfield, J. N. Findley and C. S. Lewis were others) through archival sources such as letters, as key, rather than peripheral sources on receptions on Hegel's work. It also configures how expressions of commitment towards Hegel's work in Cold War contexts in personal correspondence could be read as para/textual elements of political meaning-making from critical perspectives of socio-narrative translation studies⁸. In Chapter 3, «Textual and Paratextual Reframing Strategies», Charlston argues that Miller used the paratext of time for political purposes: that is, Miller choosing *which* text to translate and *when*. He also details how the editors of Miller's re-translated texts used other conventional' paratextual interventions, such as the editorial introductions to

⁶ K. Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*, «Stanford Law Review», XLIII (6), 1991, pp. 1241-1299.

⁷ O. Castro and E. Ergun, *Translation and Feminism in The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, ed. by J. Evans and F. Fernandez, London-New York, Routledge, 2018, pp. 123-143.

⁸ M. Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, Oxford, Routledge, 2018; S.-A. Harding, *Beslan: Six Stories of the Siege*, Manchester-New York, Manchester University Press, 2012.

control, rather than question or challenge the dynamics of political power governing Hegel's reception in Anglophone contexts. This section, in short, gives a fascinating insight to how archival sources can help us track and understand the premises of power dynamics taken as a 'given' by Miller and his contemporaries when re-translating the dynamics of thought as configured by Hegel in another. The archival sources shed light on the public world/s of individuals aware of themselves operating within specific public dynamics of power. The 'private' nature of their circulation however invites us to consider what we can deem as 'intersectional' approaches of translation analysis when we are seeking to read gendered performativity in works emerging in earlier (patriarchal) settings of translation (or para/translation).

The second part of the book moves to how Hegel's philosophy related to the localised politics of Miller's own life previous to and during two world wars that would mark him deeply in different ways. The chapters in this part chart Miller's visits to Whiteway Colony, a «utopian, Tolstoyan anarchist colony» (p. 100) (the contexts of which brought to life by Nellie Shaw's feminist account of its early formation); the impact of Miller's friendship with Czech philosopher Francis Sedlák on his translation practice⁹ (cf. p. 129); an interview in which Miller recounts his experiences of World War One (cf. p. 115) and his obituary by May Lettington¹⁰ published in the Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain (pp. 119- 123). By looking at each source chronologically alongside excerpts from texts that Miller chose to translate, Charlston shows how a biographical study of a translator's personal politics could be read as discernible within the works s/he translates, even if s/he is not 'here' now – as Miller is not (p. 137) – to state whether this was his/her intention or not. In Part Three, Charlston uses the tools of corpus linguistics to analyse and restage a wider body of Hegel's work with a focus on key passages in Hegel's *Science of Logic* and the politically charged *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is at this point in the book that researchers of Hegelian philosophy will find much fruitful traction for debate. In Chapters 6 and 7, Charlston carries

⁹ A.V. Miller, *Defending Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, in *Hegel and Newtonianism*, ed. by M.J. Petry, Dordrecht, Springer, 1993.

¹⁰ M. Lettington, *Arnold Vincent Miller Obituary*, «Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain», XXIII-XXIV, 1993, pp. 122-126.

out peritextual and micro- textual analysis to compare different versions of passages from *Science of Logic* and *Phenomenology of Spirit* and show how Miller may have been creatively working to show Hegel ‘maturing’ by translating key terms across the two works differently (p. 178). Charlston argues that Miller’s «apparent deliberate inconsistency» (*ibidem*) in translating Hegelian ‘technical’ terms such as ‘aufheben’ was his way of working to help ‘new’ Cold War audiences distinguish between the ‘pre-mature’ and ‘mature’ Hegel in English in a way that audiences were more likely to be able do when reading Hegel’s work ‘directly’ in German. By being able to draw on so many examples of seminal texts in re-translation via corpus linguistics to then carry out close analysis, this book puts forward a strong case for combining tools of corpus translation with close comparative analysis to identify patterns and trends in individual translator and editorial practice. In the case of Hegel/Miller, Charlston argues that this approach can help us identify transformative interpretations of Hegel’s work in re/translation and refers to instances of feminist debates on Hegel¹¹ and aspects of feminist translation studies¹², to indicate where new conversations about the reception of Hegel in translation could potentially begin. Charlston reminds us of Miller’s controversial interpretations – Hegel’s belief in «God-man relationship» – at a 1978 conference (p. 224), in his concluding analysis, however, to give us a ‘heads-up’ on how varying understandings of ethical responsibilities in contexts of one translator’s work can still shape or limit transformative readings of philosophy in translation, even from a contemporary perspective.

What has this book set out to achieve? By Charlston’s detailed explanations and archival research practice, this book certainly illuminates the role of translators and publishers of philosophy in the «great trans-

¹¹ K. Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, Cambridge, Polity, 2003; J. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, New York-London, Routledge, 2004.

¹² L.V. Flotow, *Translating Women*, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 2011; L.V. Flotow and C. Shread, *Metamorphosis in Translation: Refiguring the Intimacy of Translation beyond the Metaphysics of Loss*, «Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society», XXXIX (3), 2014, pp. 592-596; C. Shread, *Translating Feminist Philosophers*, in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Philosophy*, ed. by J.P. Rawling and P. Wilson, London-New York, Routledge, 2019, pp. 324-344.

formation» of political liberalism. By using such a plurifocal sociological approach, it also gives very concrete examples of why new perspectives on individual translators and publisher practice can enhance our understanding about the ethical responsibilities and also the limitations of translators in communicating values of diversity and change in political thinking.

And what does this book mean for Hegelian scholars and researchers of translation? From its first pages, Charlston makes it abundantly clear that this book is not offering a blueprint of how to understand Hegelian philosophy 'better' in English translation through this process. As illustrated by the preface by A.V. Miller's daughter Mary Lettington, what the book is trying to do is increase critical attention to how A.V. Miller's retranslations of Hegel were constructed and received during a Cold War era – an era heralding the rise of neo-liberalism (p. 5) – as a way of opening conversations and questions on what we think we are 'receiving' when reading seminal works of philosophy, such as Hegel's, in para/translation in any language. As one way of opening a conversation on why the re-reading of Miller's re/translations of Hegel in particular is important now, Charlston works to 're-create' a moving picture of Miller's past by drawing on archival materials and critical perspectives available to him as a researcher in the present.

Using a blended methodology of archival research, interviews and socio-narrative theoretical perspectives of translation studies, Charlston has managed to bring together myriad details underpinning dynamics influencing Miller's re-translations – and re-paratranslation – which were crucial to Hegel's influence and reception in the late twentieth century. For Charlston, the varying dynamics clearly do not end in a 'freeze-frame': the conversation continues via the book's companion website *Miller's Hegel in Transformance* (<https://avmiller.co.uk>). The archival nature of the paratextual sources on which Charlston draws on to construct his analysis and open new conversations on Hegel and Hegel/Miller, highlights how important details of a work's 'politics of publication' remain unknown or are often missed when we rely on close and distant reading of texts only. As Charlston explains, access to archival materials is not always straightforward. For this reason, the details of the formats of the para/textual materials – letters, ephemera, interviews, press releases – are often as fascinating as the actual

information on Miller's retranslations of Hegel that they reveal. And if we understand translation as a crucial vector which shapes how a text could be configured and received locally and transnationally, the use of archival sources and ephemera as the points of analytical focus opens many further questions on notions of text, paratext, translation and paratranslation in relation to seminal text of philosophy: how much weight to attribute to the metatextual factors shaping a seminal work? How can we grasp a translated philosophical work if much of its details of construction are likely to be missing? While there are no definitive answers to such questions, a case study on Hegel's text re-translated by Miller between 1969 and 1986 makes such questions and materials in contexts of philosophy very fresh and relevant reading now. A gripping read for Hegelian scholars and researchers of Philosophy, Archival Studies, German Studies and Translation Studies.

(Ruth Abou Rached)

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