
Manetti, Giannozzo. *A Translator's Defence*. Edited by Myron Mc Shane; translated by Mark Young. Cambridge; London: Harvard UP, 2016. XXXVIII, 306 pages. (The I Tatti Renaissance library. 71). ISBN 978-0-674-08865-8

The I Tatti Renaissance library defines the cause underlying their publications as acquainting a broader readership with literary inheritance of the Italian Renaissance written in the Latin language. The principle behind the publication of the texts is printing them on facing pages both in the original Latin and an English translation. Thus far more than seventy books have been published over the period of 15 years.

The writings of a 15th century Florentine humanist Giannozzo Manetti were already presented in this series closer to its inception (No. 9, 2003). In 2016 a joint effort of a publisher Myron Mc Shane and a translator Mark Young made it possible to make available one of the most celebrated of Manetti's works, of which the established, albeit slightly imprecise title (as noted also by the publisher himself), is "Apologeticus", rendered in English as "A translator's Defence". G. Manetti had of long become interesting to researchers as being a pathfinder of Florentine Hebrew Studies, with his "Apologeticus", a treatise that puts forward the need to learn Hebrew and deliberates on the methods of translation from it.

It must be noted that the Christian Hebrew Studies of the time, including G. Manetti himself, did not aspire to comprehend Judaic culture, presuming instead a possibility of directly entering the domain of the original Old Testament texts to facilitate counter-Jewish polemic, specifically as regards reciprocated Jewish recriminations concerning distortions of true meanings of the Scripture in its Greek and Latin renditions. Additionally, it should be borne in mind that "Apologeticus" happens to be a companion composition, comprising an afterword and a commentary to a new Hebrew-Latin translation of the Book of Psalms authored by G. Manetti. The author himself states that at first he had sent the translation to the King of the Aragonese Alfonso, which was followed by a dispatch of his translator's notes in five instalments, for a fee. Nonetheless, all existing publications of "Apologeticus" extract these instalments from the over-

all work, whereas the proper text of Manetti's Latin "Psalms" has never been published as such. In respect of the highly reasonable considerations voiced by G. Manetti on the methods of translation not a single one of these belongs to himself, being largely a reworking of the opinions previously expressed by Cicero, St. Jerome and (without reference!) by his mentor Leonardo Bruni. It is somewhat amusing that M. Mc Shane treats of such plagiarizing as being a token of respect to the teacher.

The first book informs us that over the year which had passed following completion and dispatch of the translation of the Psalms to King Alfonso, unnamed ignoramuses and ill-wishers accused G. Manetti of arrogance, in view of the fact that another perfect translation by Jerome already existed. Although the aim of the new translation had been stated as fending off "malicious attacks of Jews and their accusations and calumnies about our texts", the invective jibes were voiced not by the Jews, but by the Christians. The author considers such snide remarks to be rather run-of-the-mill and alludes to similar taunts aimed at eminent writers of Greek and Latin antiquity, as he also does (and "this is the most important and most surprising") to reciprocal accusations of Christian authors, specifically mentioning Jerome. Later on, the author addresses the subject of the Jewish scriptures (it had been his intention to retranslate from Hebrew the entire Old Testament) as well as the origins of their translation. Of interest is a mentioning of Rabi Salomonis (Rashi) being a possible testimony to G. Manetti's familiarity with his commentary. As to the fact whether the Psalms should be construed as one Book or several Books the author withdraws from any definitive statement, in his translation preferring instead to follow the established Jewish tradition.

The first book dwells only on the outset of translation history, to which the second book is dedicated in its entirety, starting with the legendary account of the appearance of the Septuagint, and further mentioning previous translators from Hebrew into Greek, such as Aquila of Pontus, Theodotion of Ephesus, Symmachus, as well as two anonymous translators, alongside a treatment of Jerome's translations from the Septuagint and from the Hebrew, which sparked off the never ceasing Jewish slander of falsifying the Scripture, in the thought of G. Manetti utterly ungrounded owing to

the slanderers' lack of proficiency in Greek and Latin. The author also mentions the anonymous Latin Psalter *Versio Gallicana* thereafter not subjected to any further treatment. To conclude the author considers discrepancies in two of Jerome's translations of the Psalms — from Greek and from Hebrew — counting nearly 6000!, yet he refrains from citing them in that second book for "it would cause Your Majesty boredom and disgust"; however, he intends, omitting most of them, to introduce the most blatant ones in the third book.

The next book begins with classifying discrepancies into three categories: additions, omissions and unsuitable translations, giving examples of selected additions, followed by omissions.

It is for the same reasons that had been mentioned in the end of the second book that the author leaves unsuitable translations for the fourth, which additionally contains discrepancies encountered in Psalm titles.

The fifth book commences with an explanation of why its dispatch was put back, presenting the reason for delay as the news of Alfonso's ill health following a hunting accident and the corresponding lack of assurance as to the recipient being still alive. Here Manetti also complains of a delayed payment which could be rectified only by the king's direct interference.

Further on, the author recapitulates on the previous books and proceeds to the last point remaining to be discussed: what the right translation should be. General observations — it is requisite not only to be proficient in the language of the original but also to be well versed in literature composed in it; one also needs to possess a thorough knowledge of the target language. His note on the falsity of the interlinear word-for-word translation is totally justified, for not only do such translations look ridiculous (especially in case of idioms), they also strip the original of its clarity, if not entirely distorting its meaning. (I should at this point add my own observation that a great many mediaeval translations done in this manner significantly darkened — and, therefore, distorted — compositions of Greek and Latin antiquity, which possibly compelled Hegel to the ill-fated conviction that philosophy cannot be written down in colloquial parlance). One should translate based on the meaning (allowing both omissions and additions), however, the degree of freedom exhibited in poetic, rhetorical and historical works, on the one hand, and the same degree of freedom acceptable for philosophical and theological compositions, on the other hand, should be different, especially when translating the Holy Scripture, where "a middle and safe way" should be exercised, Jerome being a paragon of quality in this respect. The reference made to the Aramaic *Targum Onkelos* is tangentially testimonial of its possible textual availability to the author. There is no direct statement of the reason that had

driven the author to retranslate a Scriptural text but it should be noted that with all his reverence towards Jerome, Manetti does not trust Jerome's translation to be completely immaculate. As has already been stated, Manetti's deliberations considering translation methods are largely based on his respected repetition of received knowledge, with hardly any additions of his own.

The text is preceded by an Introduction written by Myron McShane, a nonpareil of perfectly combined content-richness and brevity, where on just 20 pages the publisher succeeds in giving all requisite information, accompanied by the necessary bibliographical references for those who wish to know more. It is not entirely uninteresting that the publisher quotes Manetti's text in a translation which is different to that of M. Young.

The publication of the Latin text is based on the known edition by Alfonso De Petris with several alterations of Latin usage. For my part, I would have added several alterations of Hebrew words by Manetti. He had indeed mastered Hebrew and his renderings of Hebrew vocabulary are relatively precise (sometimes employing Italian orthography, e. g. *sciglia* for "שליה"), so that the spelling *Diureagianum* to gloss "דברי הימים" is obviously a faulty reading by the publisher; it is doubtless that Manetti spells it as *Diureagiamim*! Also questionable is the reading of *Chedovin* for "כתבים" (cf. *Idithum*, *Idudum*, *Iditum* for "ידיתון", "ידיתון") it is possible also that other Biblical proper names need to be amended. Quoting Jerome in reference to Mark [5:41], instead of the habitual Aramaic phrase, the Hebrew *Ialda cumi* ("ילדה קומי") is given, however, this question should be addressed rather to Jerome, than to Manetti.

In his translation, Marc Young, as though following in the footsteps of Manetti himself, strives to make the text as clear as possible for the reader. For this to be achieved the translator not infrequently allows his personal encroachments on the translated text, not marking them graphically in any way, based on which the original and the translation may appear different. The translator does not endeavour to render the synonymic patterns of the original, whereby e. g. *nihil deest*, *nihil omittitur*, *nihil deficit* are translated uniformly as "nothing is missing". His usage of the word "esoteric" glossing the original *non ineptus presertim in materia* also comes across as not entirely relevant.

Whatever the case, this edition of the I Tatti Renaissance library is laudable, for it has for the first time presented the complete English translation of Manetti, allowing readers not only to acquaint themselves with the text but also somehow to denude the author's persona and his treatise of any unnecessary mystery.

I. Wojewódzki