LETTERS

The Art of Translation

TO THE EDITOR:
We were surprised to read in these pages Benjamin Moser's negative review of Kate Briggs's "This Little Art" (July 1), a book that, even after our many collective decades active in translation and translation studies, we found fresh, stimulating and inspiriting, vital and rich. Beyond the review's general tone of condescension and occasional misogynistic sniping, Moser gives only a scanty and distorted notion of the book's contents and instead spends most of his review debunking points Briggs never made. Whereas Briggs offers lyrical, insightful and contrapuntally crafted meditations on the art of translation — intercut with responses to an impressive range of writers, thinkers and theorists, most notably Roland Barthes — Moser reduces her book to a facile "argument" that he then attacks narrowly and single-mindedly.

Briggs does not set out to propose an extended argument for why translations are necessary or a grand unified theory claiming that all translations are entitled to boundless artistic license, as Moser misleadingly suggests. (And, certainly, she does not maintain, as Moser absurdly offers, that all translations are good and that mistakes don't matter.) Rather, contemplating personal and public histories of translation in the tradition of Montaigne's *essai*, and "actively parrying against the all-purpose explanation," she explores the forms of creativity and critical thinking, responsibility and risk inherent in every act of translation. Nor is Moser's simplistic and retrograde (Nabokovian?) insistence on accuracy as a universally determinable gold standard for translation of much use here. While Briggs clearly believes in the importance of accuracy in translation, she is simply not willing to declare that the presence of basic mistakes — as in the case of Helen Lowe-Porter's "The Magic Mountain" — necessarily means a translation is unsuccessful, uninteresting or unimportant. It is precisely Briggs's nuanced examination of the ways in which we think about accuracy that makes the poetics of translation she presents in "This Little Art" so compelling. There are questions that she poses in the book and leaves open precisely because she experiences them as specific, complicated and open-ended. The tone of Moser's review suggests that allowing for uncertainty, acknowledging complication and contradiction, including — and thinking with — "subjective impressions" (which he sets in opposition to "objective scholarship") implies a lack of argumentative rigor or intellectual seriousness.

In fact, Briggs's book, in its elegance, humility and foregrounding of intellectual curiosity, effectively encourages just the sort of subtly nuanced thought that is surprisingly absent from Moser's reductive and misrepresentative review, which only compounds the prevalent general misunderstanding of translation as a "concrete art" and aids in the vilification and dismissal not only of Briggs but of translation itself along with translators, in a way that has consequences for what and how we read.

We urge readers not to let Moser's perfunctory and dismissive review dissuade them from picking up this valuable contribution to the literature of translation.

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TO THE EDITOR:
I'm appalled by the misreading of Kate Briggs's "This Little Art" in Benjamin Moser's review, with the digital headline "Did He Really Say That?" I kept asking myself that question, starting with the opening condescension, paraphrased here: Reading Barthes can make you (and has made Briggs, one of his translators) a sloppy thinker. Was Moser reacting to an existential fear of the vital, non-linear reasoning presented in the book? Briggs, picking up threads from her own translation of Barthes, various translation memoirs, her Paris aerobics class and other experiences, weaves a delicate net of inquiry into the art of translation. In the lacunae created by this associative web, the reader is invited to make meaning.

Moser's review spiraled into the absurd when he suggested that if translators "look to the whole" — as Briggs, citing the translator Helen Lowe-Porter, proposes — it might be a slippery slope from a lack of attention to detail in translation to a degradation of "standards" in fields as far removed as aviation and dentistry. Importantly, Briggs does not suggest that we ignore word-by-word issues and "look to the whole" while *writing* translations, but that we take a broad view in reviewing, teaching or discussing works in translation, thus avoiding a criticism based on "gotcha" moments or small mistakes in the text.

HEATHER GREEN
FAIRFAX, VA.

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TO THE EDITOR:
As a granddaughter-in-law of the translator Helen Lowe-Porter, I am sorry to see the scorn directed at her by the reviewer of "This Little Art." In her lifetime, Helen was all too accustomed to being criticized — by Thomas Mann, who thought his work needed a man's mind; by Alfred A. Knopf, who pressured her to work faster; by critics such as Harry Levin, who attacked her in print for an omission that was in fact requested by Mann himself. Readers should consider another side of the story, in which a woman with considerable literary talents of her own spent roughly 30 years of her life bringing a majority of Thomas Mann's works to English-speaking readers. In a letter to Knopf in 1943, Helen wrote that her aim when translating was to get Mann's words "well into my ear and feeling," and then "use it to clothe as meticulous, supple and intuitive a rendering of the original as I possibly could."

JO SALAS
NEW PALTZ, N.Y.

This bulletin is published by arrangement with Il Tascabile
— Istituto Enciclopedico Treccani.

Cover: Letters to the Editor cut from *The New York Times Book Review*, July 20, 2018.

BoTSL#14 2018 SEP 15 4:16 PM

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways,

The Man, O Muse, informe that many a way

The man for wisdom's various arts renown'd,

Muse, tell me of the man of many wiles,

Sing in me, Muse, [...] of that man skilled in all ways of contending,

Tell me, Muse, about the man of many turns,

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns

Tell me, O muse, of that ingenious hero

Tell me, Muse, the story of that very resourceful man

Muse, tell me of a man: a man of much resource

These are ten English translations of the opening line of the *Odyssey*. There are many more. Collectively, they identify quite clearly what Homer's original line was about, like a system of satellites might collectively point at the location of the dark body around which they orbit: the "telling," the "muse," and a man "of many ways," or "turns," or "wiles," or "resources."

What these translations have in common, however, is not merely their content: there is also a specific form of strangeness, a tinge of awkwardness. No writer — today or in the English-speaking past — would open their work describing the protagonist as "a man of many turns." It is not a very catchy phrase. The image it evokes is not very precise, or rather, it seems to hint approximately at something which is outlined very precisely in the writer's mind and yet only comes across as blurry, indeterminate on paper. This could be a good definition of lazy writing. It is also a good definition of translation, with the "writer's mind" standing for an original text of which the translator strives, and often fails, to offer a precise rendering across languages and cultures.

It might seem striking that such a variety of interpretations could be spawned by the same original Greek line, yet comparing translations commonly yields similar results. Translators are bridgers of gaps — in language, in geography — and it is often up to the translator's sensibility, shaped by her experience and her times, to decide precisely what the bridge will be made of, where it will land.

This is even more relevant when translating classics such as Homer's *Odyssey*, where the distance to bridge is not only in space but in time. Here, the problem is not only to "convert" words from a code to another ("green" for *verde*, "border" for *Grenze*), or to adapt syntax and style. The language they are written in is long dead and still at times obscure, its dictionaries often conjectured from the same text they should help parse. The very idea of literature underpinning the text — how it should sound, how it should work, why it exists to begin with — comes across as radically alien to a reader of the original.

Homer's texts derive from an oral tradition sung at feasts over several centuries in ancient Greece; they were later transcribed, tampered with by ancient scholars, and read and discussed and translated and imitated until they were absorbed into the Western canon. All of these steps are now part of what we see in Homer's texts. There is no way to understand what the original sounded like because there is no one way they sound. They don't only invite interpretation; they require it.

Traditionally, this alienness has been imported into the translated text by making it sound somewhat awkward. An artificially antique register in the target language was chosen to somehow evoke the original's ancientness. The desire for philological rigor made it impossible to keep the original's beat and flow — also because Greek verse was not based on rhymes or on a weight-based rhythm, as in English or Italian or French, but on an aspect of syllables now lost to most European languages called quantity, or length. The very "timelessness" attributed to a classic (which of course was all but timeless at the moment in which it was composed) discouraged translators from wishing to sound too modern, as if contemporary language didn't befit a text so revered in the Western canon. Quite similarly, Renaissance sculptors lauded and copied Roman and Greek statues, which struck them as simply and elegantly pure in their sheer white marble, when in fact they were unaware that their original garish paint coating had been lost over the centuries.

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In 2017, a new English translation of the *Odyssey* was published by Norton, written by ancient Greek scholar and professor Emily Wilson. This is how it opens:

Tell me about a complicated man.

Homer had never spoken like this before. It goes on:

Muse, tell me how he wandered and was lost
when he had wrecked the holy town of Troy,
and where he went, and who he met, the pain
he suffered in the storms at sea, and how
he worked to save his life and bring his men
back home. He failed to keep them safe; poor fools,
they ate the Sun God's cattle, and the god
kept them from home. Now goddess, child of Zeus,
tell the old story for our modern times.
Find the beginning.
All the other Greeks
who had survived the brutal sack of Troy
sailed safely home to their own wives — except
this man alone. Calypso, a great goddess,
had trapped him in her cave; she wanted him
to be her husband. When the year rolled round
in which the gods decreed he should go home
to Ithaca, his troubles still went on.

Much has been written about the dazzling precision of this first line's wording — how it highlights Odysseus' exceptionality while also hinting at the darker, complex sides that the contemporary notion of "hero" tends to overshadow; how it finds an immediately evident analogue for a notion such as "many-turned," which clearly comes across as hard to parse to a contemporary reader, while at the time it must not have been so.

The fact that Emily Wilson is the first woman to translate the *Odyssey* into English has been used as a prism through which to analyze her equally innovative rendition of Penelope — who comes across as much more empowered and aware than in most past translations.

However, a focus on these immediately striking, anecdotally powerful details can overshadow Wilson's deeper and more diffuse achievement. The most remarkable feature of her translation is how supple and enjoyable it is to read. It is something that could have been read out loud while people feasted. It speaks of a strange and distant world, but it speaks to us.

Wilson's translation strikes today's reader as something both alien and very familiar, foreign and immediate. It speaks a language one knows and masters to describe a world that is mysterious and other. It doesn't hide the fact that it is a translation, but it also doesn't hide *behind* it. It doesn't treat the distance of the original as something to resist or to suffer, but as something to embrace.

. . .

In her extremely well-argued and at times touching Translator's Note, Wilson characterizes her approach as a refusal of the "gendered metaphor of fidelity" in translation. A translator's task, she writes, is not to speak in place of an absent original, striving (and failing) to faithfully match its voice across a gap in space and time. Rather, it is to create a setting (finding a voice, a rhythm, a language) that will allow the original to speak for itself, in one of many possible ways.

This metaphor seems particularly appropriate to the *Odyssey*. As Wilson writes at the end of her Note:

The poem is concerned above all with the duties and dangers involved in welcoming foreigners into one's home. I hope my translation will enable contemporary readers to welcome and host this foreign poem, with all the right degrees of warmth, curiosity, openness and suspicion.

There is a stranger outside your house. He is old, ragged, and dirty. He is tired. He has been wandering, homeless, for a long time, perhaps many years. Invite him inside. You do not know his name. He may be a thief. He may be a murderer. He may be a god. He may remind you of your husband, your father or yourself. Do not ask questions. Wait. Let him sit on a comfortable chair and warm himself beside your fire. Bring him some food, the best you have, and a cup of wine. Let him eat and drink until he is satisfied. Be patient. When he is finished, he will tell his story. Listen carefully. It may not be as you expect.

(VL)

Vincenzo Latronico: The idea of sitting down one day and embarking on the translation of the *Odyssey* is just utterly terrifying.

Emily Wilson: It's a huge project and it's been done so many times before. I had to ask myself, is it worth doing it again? Is mine going to be different enough without being gimmicky, different in a truthful way? I don't know about that [laughs] but I guess I didn't feel terrified day-to-day while I was working at it, because it was both so difficult and so interesting that I was mostly focused on the specific challenges of every line, rather than on, you know, the terror.

V: How did you start? How long did it take you?

E: It took me five years. It started because I was working on the Norton Anthologies of World Literature and Western Literature. So, through that I got to know an editor called Pete Simon, and he was looking for a new translation of the *Odyssey*. So he asked me, and I hesitated at first, because I really wanted to be sure that I was going to be able to do something that was worthwhile. Then I went and re-read sections of the other translations people usually read in English, to see what is out there and to figure out if the world needed another translation. I wanted to know if I thought I could do something that was genuine, bringing out something different from the original. From that process I decided that, yes, the world needed a new one and maybe I could do something different. One of the things I felt very strongly in the beginning was that I don't like the tendency in Anglophone translations of classical verse to use non-metrical free verse, even though the original is very regular, very musical. So I felt from the start I didn't want to do that. I wanted to use iambic pentameter. I didn't like the way in which some of the most used translations are either clunkily archaic, or bombastic. They're trying to heroize the story, to heroize the style, in ways that I think are fundamentally false to what the original is about. I had a literary and poetic agenda from the start.

V: And this is immediately shocking for a reader. What really struck me, being somewhat familiar with the Homeric Greek, was that in a way it's as if the meter that you were adopting allowed you to do away with all the pomposity. The distance from the standard tone was already absorbed by the fact that, to a contemporary reader, reading such a long metric text is already an unfamiliar experience.

E: I felt this was a way I could create a balance. The text has to be very artificial, it has to be markedly poetic and different from normal discourse, which I do by making it in a regular meter. Meter marks the fact that it is poetry. That meant that I was then able, lexically, to make it very clear and speakable. I could create this kind of tension — is it artificial or is it natural? Is it speakable or is it elevated? — in a totally different way from

what other translations had done, at least in the 20th and 21st centuries in English.

V: In the introduction you wrote: "the shock of encountering an ancient author speaking in a largely recognizable language can make it seem more strange and newly strange." When I read your version, I had already read the *Odyssey* twice or three times in my life, and yet some images had completely escaped me. One that really stuck with me, perhaps for its not being so significant within the poem, is "tunic [...] soft as dried-up onion peel." It's totally alien.

E: Yes, exactly! I hope that really happens, that people actually feel it's such a distant world not because the translator expresses it in his own pompous language, but because it comes from such a distant world, from 3000 years ago. It's a different kind of alienation.

V: I don't know about the United States, but in Italy our relationship with the classics is very fraught, and ...

E: ... well [laughs], here it's differently fraught, maybe ...

V: ... right, it's ritualized in so many ways. So, when I first came across your translation I was so completely awed by it that I shared it with many friends, and mostly everyone at first was rather shocked. Not only in a positive way. They saw something of the sacrilege going on. Did this happen to English readers too?

E: Many classicist readers have been very positive about the translation, because of its closeness to the original Greek, and because it brings out elements of the original that are obscured by other translations. If I'm challenging something, it's not Homer: it's the contemporary reception and translation of "Homer." That's not sacrilege; it's knocking down the Golden Calf. There's been a lot of focus on the first line, partly because you don't have to read beyond line one, and a lot of discussion of my use of the word "complicated": whether it's too modern, and also whether it's too much focused on Odysseus' internal state as opposed to his external wandering. I think the second is a valid question; it's something I worried about myself. But "Does it sound too modern?" seems to me an absurd question, even though it's one some people are asking. Somehow, a translation of the *Odyssey* is not supposed to sound modern. But it's utterly absurd that, while you are writing modern English, if you make it sound like *less modern* English it's actually more authentic. It makes you much *less* authentic: you're telling this fundamental stylistic lie. Archaizing or stilted English isn't any closer to archaic Greek than readable English, and in some ways it's a lot further away, because Homeric Greek isn't stilted or unreadable or ugly.

V: You referred to your choice to translate πολύτροπος (*polýtropos*; *polús*, "many" + *trópos*, "turn") as 'complicated'; but something I was even more struck by was your translation of πολύμητις (*polýmetis*; *polús*, "many" + *métis*, "wisdom, skill, cunning"). I have the impression that more than trying to make Penelope into a kind of feminist icon, as say some reviews of your translation, you seem to have an interest in depicting the complexity and even the dark side of Odysseus. At the beginning of book 9 you translate polýmetis as "king of lies."

E: Yes, absolutely! I'm glad you picked that up. *Métis* in classical Greek culture is a very ambivalent concept. It's not clear that having so much *métis* is necessarily a good thing. I wanted to bring out the full range of that. I used "king of lies" in that instance partly to flag the fact that this is the moment in which Odysseus starts to tell his story in first person. I think the fact that he's called *polýmetis* at the beginning of that section could underline that he is to be taken as an unreliable narrator. It's not that I wanted to present him as a villain. But I wanted to encourage the reader to feel comfortable about being uncomfortable about Odysseus.

V: In the translations I am familiar with, he is often referred to as a "hero." I checked what these occurrences of "hero" corresponded to in Greek and most often I found that it was just ανήρ (*hanér* simply means "man" as opposed to "woman").

E: Yes! One thing we should remember is that ήρως (*héros*) suggests "warrior," not necessarily "good person"; that's a much later use of the modern word "hero." Even in "hero cults" in classical and archaic Greece — quasi-religious practices remembering those figures — they were considered at most mythical characters. But presenting somebody as a larger-than-life mythical character, or presenting him as a warrior, is not the same as presenting him as a "hero" in the modern sense. The word δῖος (díos), meaning "shining, bright, godlike, close to Zeus," is sometimes translated as "hero," in other translations. But again, it doesn't mean that. It's an epithet that simply suggests something special or important about this character. It doesn't mean "good guy." So I didn't want to be importing the modern desire for the protagonist to be a "hero." This would have been putting something into the ancient text which wasn't there.

V: In your introduction you write of Odysseus as someone "difficult, secretive, aggressive: a liar, a pirate, a colonizer, a thief." Of course he's all that, yet all these aspects of his personality got somehow toned down in previous translations. But there is also another aspect of Odysseus that you bring out, when you depict him as a traumatized and dark character.

E: All his epithets — not just *polýmetis*, *polýtropos*, but also πολυμήχανος (*polýmechanos; polús*, "many" + *méchanos*, "resource") — have to do with his multiplicity and I think this emerges much more clearly in my translation than in all the others I've looked at. He's multiple. I hope that the fact that he's a war veteran emerges as well. The fact that he's dark doesn't mean I'm trying to say everybody should hate him, but I want to evoke in the reader a deeper understanding of the full range of his character, which doesn't happen if you say, from the start, "you're not allowed to criticize this character, because he's a hero," which is totally not what the original is doing.

V: A usually very puzzling scene in your translation suddenly makes more sense: Why does Odysseus, in the last book, try to lie to his father? Why does he test him?

E: This might be because I don't insist on simplifying his character. Seeing the full range of behaviors that he has adopted up to that point, you can see how this is plausible. In book 13, in his encounter with Athena, he is presented — in my translation — as "addicted to lying." It makes sense for him to want to test people and tell lies even when it's entirely unnecessary. It's hard not to say this in terms that sound more negative than I mean. You can see his power hunger, his desire to control. That's an understandable human impulse, not necessarily a bad trait; we all want power. But it is very deep in the depiction of Odysseus: he wants to be in control of absolutely every situation, every relationship, both in terms of physical force and in terms of outwitting everybody else. And he does have a dark side.

V: He comes across a little bit as someone with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

E: I hope that does emerge. Of course people get anxious when you import modern psychological language onto an ancient text, because they didn't have that term; but that doesn't mean they didn't know how fighting in a war for ten years can affect people. If you wish to be sympathetic to the character, you might say his desire for control comes from having been through so much pain, and so many situations where it's very hard to retain a sense of self, a sense of control.

V: The opposite seems to happen to Penelope. In other translations, she is characterized in ways that are much closer to a stereotypical "good wife" as we might understand that today. For instance, in book 24, when Agamemnon is saying the gods will sing a poem about Penelope the εχέφρονι (*exéphroni*, "sensible, prudent"): you translate that as referring to intelligence, which is in line with most dictionaries I've checked, but the standard Italian translation — which was done by a woman — translated it as "faithful."

E: Oooh. [laughs] Which of course is importing a modern vision of Penelope back onto the original. There isn't anything in the original Greek that corresponds to the modern word "faithful." That's essential to the post-Homeric depiction of Penelope. But in Homer none of her standard epithets implied she was faithful, at all. They are about cognitive capacities.

V: The same thing happened for instance when you refer to her "mysterious" laugh, in book 18—αχρείον (*axréion*; "inconvenient, unsuitable"). In Italian translations, this is a "bitter" laugh and it so changes the meaning of the scene.

E: It really does, yes. It's a much-discussed scene in Homeric scholarship: why is she laughing? What exactly is going on there? And I just wanted to preserve some of the mystery, to flag that the original text doesn't really tell us how to interpret her motivations. Quite a lot of the translations in English as well over-interpret her, or interpret her in a particular way, which isn't truthful to the fact that the Homeric poem is veiling Penelope—her psychology as well as her face.

V: Another striking thing to a modern reader is the insistence on the metaphorical connection between women and dogs. In Italian, the female word for dog is very sexual, with extremely negative connotations —someone sullied and overwhelmed by desire.

E: In English, "bitch" is not the same as "whore." It suggests cruelty. The word "bitch" is completely feminized, it depicts a kind of low-level cruelty women are imagined using to get illegitimate power over people by being mean. I tried to avoid this word most of the time for translating the Greek κύων (*kúon*) and its cognates, but other English translators use it a lot. In archaic Greek culture, being a dog is an all-purpose insult term, because dogs are the animals that are closest to being human: they share the house with human beings, they eat the same food. On the other hand, if you called somebody a pig it meant they were greedy; or a vulture, or hyena, those animals are used for specific insults. These are animals that don't live in the same house as humans. "Dog" could apply to both a man and a woman, and was used to imply they were not quite human, that there was something wrong with their humanity. It was used more often on women, because their humanity was more often questioned. But that's quite different from both the sexualized insult in Italian, and the English term "bitch," which implies cruelty.

V: You referred to the word "godlike" which in your version is maybe one of the uncanniest signals of the text's distant origin. It is probably one of very few words in your translation that nobody would ever use nowadays.

E: Yes, and I wasn't going to get rid of it because it's central to the poem's imaginary. It has to do with the relationship between mortals and gods. If you are an extra special kind of person who, however, can die, are you closer to being a person who doesn't die? What this word seems to say is that, in particular moments of your life, you look like you're not going to die. I agree with you that it's certainly not something that anybody nowadays would say. And I'm conscious that in some scenes of the poem in my translation it can be a sort of shock. For instance, in the scene in the start of book 2 where Telemachus is getting up, putting on his sandals — it's a completely ordinary getting out of bed scene. Then he emerges, and he's looking like a god [laughing].

It's very striking. I hope it is very striking. This gets back to the question of how — if you're not trying to be artificially elevated all the time — there can be a particular emphasis that comes in, the shock of the things that *are* different. I hope that's one of the things that become extra shocking: this is a poem that's wrestling with the question of what does it mean to be godlike.

V: In the middle of this, some words, on the other hand, surprise you for their closeness: picnic, kebab, hobo… What was your reasoning for creating this mix?

E: Well, the Homeric poems are syntactically very clear — much easier to read than, say, Thucydides; but in terms of the word choice, because of the long oral tradition, from all parts of Greece, they are a mix of dialects, and words from different time periods. It's a language no one individual ever spoke. It has a hodgepodge element to it. And I wasn't going to render that by suddenly lapsing into cockney, then African-American, Canadian, and British. That would come across as gimmicky. But I wanted there to be a sense that the linguistic texture is going to vary sometimes, and one of the ways I did that was by having some words that are more markedly modern than the general level. Sometimes you're going to feel this is entirely like your world, and sometimes it's going to feel like an entirely alien world — sometimes they have picnics, sometimes they're godlike. There is a multiplicity in the style, it's very close and very far away.

V: The oral tradition of the *Odyssey* is evident in the role of fixed epithets. Here, too, you have chosen to handle them in a markedly innovative way. In your version, they regularly change.

E: A fundamental question for me was how to evoke the sense, in Homeric verse, that things repeat, repeat, repeat. There is a strong formulaic element to it. In the original context people were accustomed to verse that repeats a lot. If you're illiterate or semi-literate, repetition has a specific

function in your culture. If something is repeated, it means it matters. In our culture it's the opposite. If something is repeated it means it doesn't matter, it's a cliché: you've already read it, you move on. I was trying to create the same effect, which means I had to use different tools. If the effect of the epithet is to qualify something as important about a character, I need to change the words I use to say it, in order to make the reader keep paying attention to every word.

I'm not trying to get rid of the sense that things repeat. Dawn is always going to have roses or pinkness, she's going to be a goddess, she's going to be new-born or early-born every time. But I'm going to vary it, so that the metaphor can be alive every time. The same happens to the different epithets of Odysseus, all about multiplicity. I translate them in different ways every time, in the hopes of conveying what Homer is doing with those epithets, which is showing you the full range of who this character is, how very multiple he is.

V: This will be the only mention of this topic in this conversation, but there you go. Epithets come across as something completely alien to the way we speak today. But it occurs to me that Donald Trump uses them a lot. "Failing New York Times," "Crooked Hillary," "Little Marco": these are epithets.

E: He does. Maybe it relates to what I just said about illiterate or semi-literate cultures, and about how in our world, the use of repeated epithets can discourage thought.

V: Another word with a frisson of potential anachronism is the word "migrant." In the book there is a sort of trope about men who used to be kings and end up in rags; your word choice seems to point at an underlying theme in your translation of the *Odyssey*.

E: There are reasons, in the present moment, to be thinking about migrants. The *Odyssey* originates in a time in which the Greeks were perpetrating colonization and war, there was a diaspora of Greek-speakers from different homelands, Greek speakers were migrants, they caused and encountered migration. The poem is very interested in people who have been forced out of their home, and in several passages it seems to meditate on what to do about them. The whole value-system of ξενία (*xenía*) is partly about how to deal with people — at least elite male people — who have been forced out of their home, what kind of obligation is there to offer them food and clothing and safety. You could say, of course, that everything is completely different in the modern world. It is. But the idea that modern migrants are suffering things that can be similar to what people suffered in antiquity when forced out of their homes doesn't strike me as wrong. There is a continuity in that kind of suffering.

In my translation I wished to bring it out.

V: But in a way, couldn't this be understood as an "unfaithful" translation —the imposition of a contemporary meaning where there originally was none?

E: This poem itself shows us how there is a gendered double standard about what it means to be loyal to another person (or relationship or idea or place). For Odysseus, loyalty to his wife is compatible with love affairs with goddesses and 20 years away from home. For Penelope, there's a different standard. The term "fidelity," for a translator, risks implying that there's just one way to be loyal towards the original text. It can imply that the translator is always secondary and always passive, just as the woman is supposed to be secondary and passive, waiting not moving, receptive not active, in the standard heteronormative model of marriage or other heterosexual relationships. But translators, including myself but not only me, are actually much more like Odysseus. We are constantly in disguise, telling other people's stories in words that are and are not ours —and those apparent lies can be the best or only way to revelation or truth. I know you asked about my showing the "dark side" of Odysseus, but I hope you also understand how deeply I see myself in Odysseus, as a translator and writer, and in many other ways. We are, if we're translating an ancient text, always trying to turn back time, or take the reader back to a world which existed many years before —just as Odysseus tries to return not just to a place but a time that he left 20 years ago. Like my translation, "much-turned" or "much-translated" Odysseus exists in the past and present at the same time. Translators are always discovering and creating a new form of Ithaca, a new home and new language for our traveling guest. This isn't just about me: all translators make choices and create a new text. I think "responsibility" is a more useful term than "fidelity," because it invites more reflection about the many different responsibilities a translator has, and more awareness of how many, many turns we need to take to fulfill them.

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