

Mounin, Georges.

Οι Ωραίες Άπιστες.

Trans. by students from the Inter-University Interdepartmental Programme of Postgraduate Studies on “Translation-Translation Studies,” University of Athens.

Athens: Metaichmio, 2003 (136 pp.)

ISBN 960-375-583-4.

In this monograph, Georges Mounin, the father of Translation Studies in France and one of the pioneers of Translation Studies in general, embarks on an effort to defend the possibility of translation.

Mounin begins by exposing the arguments in favour of the impossibility of translation, namely semantic, morphological, phonological and stylistic arguments. The very first question, set as the title of the first chapter, “Is Translation Possible?,” already casts doubt and prepares the reader for that which is to follow: “Translation is Possible” Mounin affirms immediately afterwards. Postulating the necessity of translation as a basis, he moves on to refute step-by-step, with almost surgical precision, all arguments against the possibility of translation. While doing this, and on the basis of meticulous historical documentation, he goes on to grant translation its own place in history, thereby releasing it from the bonds of an overly descriptive grammar. Finally, in the last chapter of this condensed essay, Mounin illustrates various translation approaches ranging from the word-by-word translations to the “belles infideles,” a 17th century approach dictating that all translation elements should be censored in order for the translation to conform to the refined manners of that era, evading “οτιδήποτε ερχόταν σε αντίθεση με την αισθητική της εποχής...” (p. 64).

In his text, he does not offer a panacea for all translation problems, but he does offer tangible support to any confused translator by juxtaposing and analyzing several translations of the same texts. Although Mounin acknowledges that, in any event, the power of language is not to be underestimated, he manages to convince readers that, if skillfully and lovingly manipulated, language can serve translations and translators alike and can overcome seemingly insurmountable translation obstacles. Emphasis is placed on the “homogeneity” and “unity of tone” rather than isolated and ultimately inconsequential success stories in semantics, phonology or style. Mounin insists that more than anything else, equivalence and conscientious exploration of language is called for in translation. He points out that despite impediments and obstacles on every level, translation is possible and any impasse

exists only in preconditioned minds of translators themselves and should be overcome.

As far as the translation of Mounin's text itself is concerned, it is generally of high quality. It is also quite homogeneous, a great achievement given that the translation is the product of a team effort: it was produced by students from the Inter-University Interdepartmental Programme of Postgraduate Studies in "Translation-Translation Studies" at the University of Athens. The quality of the book is enhanced even more by the inclusion of the original Ancient Greek extracts only hinted at in the French original and in the translated volume provided by Titika Dimitroulia. Although it takes time to browse these endnotes, this is certainly a worthwhile undertaking for the Greek reader. As contemporary and timely as the original was in 1955, its translation "Οι Ωραίες Απιστεες" offers a detailed and carefully researched historical retrospection of translation theories and encourages today's translation teachers and students alike in their task by offering an antidote to the impasse of the seemingly "untranslatable."

Furthermore, given the success of this particular translation effort, it is hoped that this translation is only the beginning and that other works on translation and Translation Studies will soon follow and bring Greek readers closer to the international up-to-date realm of translation theory and practice.

Kyriaki Kourouni
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki