

Foreignization as a Theory of Translation in C. S. Lewis's *Aeneid*

Reception scholars have noted that translation is a form of reception (Armstrong and Lianeri 2025), and efforts have been made to study the history of translating Virgil throughout time and place (Braund and Torlone 2018). This paper utilizes the lens of translation as reception to examine C. S. Lewis's partial translation of the *Aeneid*, which was published posthumously in *C.S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid*, edited by A.T. Reyes (2011). I argue that by using archaic diction as a foreignizing technique in his translation of the *Aeneid*, Lewis emulates the style of medieval poetry, which he perceives as more genuine than humanist or modern *Aeneid* translations.

In my approach to Lewis's translation, I draw on Lawrence Venuti's distinction between domesticating and foreignizing translation (Venuti 2008). According to Venuti, "domesticating translation" reads fluently, making the translator invisible and failing to remind the reader that the text originates from a different culture (2008, 1, 12-13, 16). Alternatively, "foreignizing translation" employs a non-fluent style which "draw[s] on materials that are not currently dominant, namely the marginal and the nonstandard, the residual and the emergent" (Venuti 2008, 19-20). This alerts the reader that the text is foreign.

In Section One, I provide examples of the archaic diction that foreignizes Lewis's translation. One striking example is 2.80, when Lewis translates *vanium etiam mendacemque* as "glozing lies and cozenage." Another is the passage in which Lewis describes the boatman in the underworld:

Them as the Stygian boatman through the silent wood
Approaching, and arrived the bank, beheld, thus he
Spake first, upbraiding unprovoked. "Whoe'er thou be

That thus in armour comest to my ford, ho! Stand! (6.385-89)

In Section Two, I examine Lewis's ideas about the *Aeneid*, translation, and ancient literature, relying on some of his publications (e.g. Lewis 1965, 1966a, and 1966b). Lewis's reception is shaped by his own place in the history of *Aeneid* translation, specifically what he perceives as the virtues of medieval or medievalizing translations (Gavin Douglas, William Morris) and the faults of later translators (John Dryden, C. Day Lewis) (Reyes 2011, Lewis 1965). Lewis reacts against what he perceives as the damage that humanists inflicted on classical texts (Lewis 1965).

In Section Three, I engage with reviews by Emily Wilson and Sarah Ruden, recent translators of epic, to critique and nuance A. T. Reyes, D. O. Ross, and Walter Hooper's evaluations of Lewis's translation (as published in *C. S. Lewis's Lost Aeneid*). Against Ross, who believes that Lewis's medievalizing style "gives us a truer impression of Virgil than any of our recent translations," Lewis's *Aeneid* is not inherently better or more accurate than others (in Reyes 2011, xix). Yet, Ross is correct that Lewis's archaism lacks "readability," thereby foreignizing, which is a counterbalance to more readable translations of Lewis's day (in Reyes 2011, xviii). I concur with Wilson, who recognizes the potential downfall of "fake medievalism," but concludes that "Lewis's translation is...worth reading... It is a challenge to re-think how we see Virgil's *Aeneid*" (2011, 32-33).

This challenge, I conclude, stems from the unique reception offered by Lewis's foreignizing translation. He uses a style that differs from the free-verse translations of his own day to offer a contrasting perspective on the *Aeneid*, reminding the reader that this is an ancient text. Lewis's archaizing approach to Latin poetry can prompt the reader to consider the *Aeneid*'s

literary and historical context more deeply, even if readers may not always agree with Lewis's unique style.

Bibliography

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