

**Brecht de Groote, *Thomas De Quincey: Romanticism in Translation*.
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The hypothesis of Brecht de Groote's *Thomas De Quincey: Romanticism in Translation* recognises the central dilemma of translation as 'the irresolvable chasm that yawns between creation and imitation' (10). From this, De Quincey conceived a formula conducive to negotiating his authorial identity and transferred this formula to other fields of knowledge.

The book is organised into four main chapters with an introduction and a coda. The first chapter returns to the familiar story of De Quincey's early career, as admirer of Wordsworth, doppelgänger of Coleridge and adversary of Carlyle. The question that De Quincey seeks to resolve centres on what mode of writing could produce a scheme of mutual compensations between primacy and secondariness, between the major and the minor. Of course, translation would be that mode, insofar as 'its structures may ground a voice, a style and a philosophy' (47).

The second chapter takes up the question of 'impassionate prose', a mode of poetic prose that De Quincey claimed as his own invention and which, like translation itself, includes two competing terms. Additionally, the chapter addresses the pertinent question of what it means to write in English in the European context of Romanticism. To do so, De Groote studies De Quincey's corpus dealing with cultural competition between nations, centrally between England, France and Germany. Translation is characterised by De Quincey, then, as an instrument of health for England. Following the Roman model, the best of other nations must be translated to revitalise one's own language and culture. De Groote studies in detail the metaphors of exchange used by De Quincey, from the more economic ones in *The Gazette* to the biological ones of grafting and inoculation in early essays. In this chapter we also find a suggestive comparison with Hölderlin's ideas about assimilating foreign languages to revitalise one's own.

The third chapter cuts to the specific question of De Quincey's translations of texts of and on Kant. In this context, De Groote reviews the remarkable changes in De Quincey's position on the Königsberg philosopher over a short period of time and, specifically, in relation to the *rifacimento* – as De Quincey called it in another language – the 'Last Days of Immanuel Kant' (1827). The re-reading of this essay translated from German sources (E. A. Wasianski above all) in the light of the problems of translation and authorship is a major contribution of the book that clears up unresolved bibliographical controversies.

The fourth chapter is one of convergence. It studies the ingenious case of *Walladmor* (1824), the "pseudo-translation" of a non-existent text by Walter Scott made in Germany by Willibald Alexis (pseudonym of Georg Wilhelm Heinrich Häring), which De Quincey then reviewed and translated for an English audience. This case, with its respective paratexts and reviews, generates a potentially infinite web of apocrypha and free versions that conceptually demolishes any pretence of separation between original and copy. For De Groote, the hoax and its offshoots form an episode in which one can read a commitment to the staging of the philosophical stance on translation in practice.

The book's coda seeks to project De Quincey's theory about the status of translation onto a more general plane. De Groote outlines two contrasting and well-known positions on the "task of the translator" (those of Benjamin and Paul de Man) and the paradox implied in

them. And he turns to a third, that of Wolfgang Iser, akin to that of De Quincey, to suggest a possible way out of the dilemma. In De Groote's re-reading, Benjamin ties the translator's task to the project of liberating in the target language the language of the original that the translator longs for, a project which, if realised, would produce a "pure language" (182), the utopia of universal meaning in which substance and form are unified.

One remarkable aspect of De Groote's book is the strategic use he makes of recent contributions to De Quincey studies to foreground De Quincey as translator and translation theorist. Certainly, one could discuss the causality implied in his design (that which goes from the dilemma of translation to the other reconfigurations) and ask whether translation is not only one of the multiple phenomena that suits De Quincey's poetics of writing. But be that as it may, there is no doubt that De Groote's book succeeds in bringing the fundamental issue of translation powerfully to the fore of the agenda of De Quinceyan scholarship and Romantic studies.

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