

Charles Perrault, Memoirs of My Life. Ed. and Trans.
Jeanne Morgan Zarucchi. (Columbia Missouri:
University of Missouri Press, 1989). i-xxv - 113 pp.
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The readers of this review are familiar with Jeanne Morgan Zarucchi's previous good works: her book-length analysis of Perrault's famous tales, *Perrault's Morals for Moderns*, as well as her other articles on this great French classical author and "creator" of the literary fairy tale. In my biography of Charles Perrault I expressed the wish that Perrault's posthumous *Mémoires de ma vie*—long out of print since their 1909 first complete edition by Paul Bonnefon—should be translated and reprinted (in the original French). The publication of the volume now being reviewed has fulfilled that wish, at least for the scholarly American reader who generally would not have access to a French edition. This is a fine translation, with an excellent introduction updating considerably the 1909 first preface of Paul Bonnefon, and adding much new material. In twenty-five succinct and elegant pages our translator tells practically everything necessary and sufficient to introduce Perrault the man and his works. She rightly emphasizes his contribution to the arts and letters of his days as public servant working under the great minister Colbert for the greater cultural and artistic glory of his king Louis XIV.

There are many questions that still challenge our minds when we think of the artistic import and impact of the reign of Louis XIV, and Perrault addresses a few of them in his *Mémoires*, notably the design and construction of the Louvre's famous colonnade on the eastern facade (not the present inner courtyard entrance in the middle of which stands the famous E. M. Pei glass pyramid, but the entrance facing the Place du Louvre between the rue de Rivoli and the Quai du Louvre).

The question is: did Perrault exaggerate or lie when he stated that the final drawings and plans were actually those done by his brother Claude, those resulting in what has been standing there for the past three centuries? The full

story is retold with charm and wit in the introduction. I particularly liked the following passage: "...what Perrault also revealed through the act of writing is the force of his character, driven by a persuasive intelligence and an underlying sincerity that is impossible to falsify" (p. 24). After more than thirty years of research and enjoyment of the works and life of Perrault, I agree with the above statement. Once again: this is a good translation and a good introduction.

Now, while sincerely admitting that this is a very good and timely translation, I wish, nevertheless to formulate a few reservations and notice a few mistakes. I don't think our author should have translated *all* the titles of Perrault's works, especially those that were not translated into English. I believe that all those titles in English will give the average reader the impression that these works do exist in translation. But this abundance of translated titles is probably due to the urging of the University of Missouri's editors who told her to make everything clear and therefore translate all the titles. Sometimes titles in English can seem right, and yet they can be quite wrong. For instance the work of Boileau mentioned as the *Art of Poetry* (p. 16), is simply *Poetics* in English, even if the French for it is *Art poétique*.

A few accents are wrong. There is no such thing as the word *galérie*, but simply *galerie*, without accent (p. 19), nor is there a "Bibliothèque Nationale," but a "Bibliothèque...(è, not é), and Richelet is the author of a *Dictionnaire français*, and not a *Dictionnaire française* (p. 133). the translation is sometimes much too literal, and this can result in rather inaccurate renditions. For instance, when Perrault wrote about the parents of his future wife: "je connais le père et la mère il y a plus de dix ans, pour avoir vécu depuis ce temps-là très familièrement ensemble," he did not mean at all that he had actually lived with them. In the French of three hundred years ago the expression simply meant "get along with, be on friendly terms." It was incorrect to translate the expression as: "on account of our having lived together," (p. 106) as it would suggest that Perrault had

lived with his in-laws before his marriage, which was not the case.

One could continue to find a few errors here and there, but these are mere blemishes on the surface of an otherwise well-wrought *oeuvre*. Let us, instead, speak of some excellent features of this translation. The University of Missouri Press have done a handsome job. They have allowed Jeanne Morgan Zarucchi to illustrate profusely her translation; one finds here all the illustrations from the 1909 French edition, plus many others, and the apparatus of footnotes offers *excellent* documentation. The same is true of the bibliography, even though one notices a few *lacunae*, which it would be too picayune on my part to mention.

Conclusion: the American and English scholars, even though they may wish to read the original out-of-print French text of Perrault's *Mémoires*, can quite confidently read this translation; it will give them access to a Perrault that fully deserves to be known, a richly complex and dedicated person, sincere and generous, intelligent and well-versed in arts and letters, important in the cultural life of a great age of French civilization. Readers of this book will discover that it is impossible to get to know Perrault without liking him, which often implies a certain degree of puzzlement, for the more one knows Perrault, the more one feels hungry for further details. That is, truly, the "charm" of Perrault. this volume belongs in the library of every self-respecting *dix-septièmiste*, not to say anything about very public or university library, here and abroad.

Jacques Barchilon