

○ **VENUTI, L. (ED.), *THE TRANSLATION STUDIES READER***

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The *Translation Studies Reader* (TSR) is a thorough historical examination of the key translation theories and practices developed from very early times to the present. TSR explores diverse forms of translation research that have emerged. It gives the reader an extensive overview of the approaches which both teachers and students of translation require in seeking to understand the field. Most importantly, Venuti's TSR highlights the approaches to translation developed during the last thirty years of the twentieth century. These years are essential in that they witness translation establishing itself as an academic discipline, and underscoring its connections to other traditional disciplines.

Well set out, TSR provides clear explanation from both the teacher's and student's perspectives. Each chapter gives salient examples of translation problems and difficulties followed by solutions and suggestions for avoiding such obstacles. TSR is written in six coherent sections, each preceded by an introduction stating the advantages and drawbacks of the current trends and practices. However, the principal aim of TSR, as stated in the editor's lucid, terse and meaningful general introduction, is to 'bring together a substantial selection... in the form of a historical survey that invites sustained examination of key theoretical development [in translation]' (1). The opening chapter introduces the reader to translation theory, tracing its history from Horace to the twentieth century, with Kelly summing it up as a set of 'changing relationships between the relative autonomy of the translated text or the translator's actions and two other categories: equivalence and function' (5). All of these make TSR very easy to navigate and thus useful as a resource.

By examining varied works from 'Jerome's Letter to Pammachius' to Nietzsche's 'Translation', the section 'Foundational Statement' argues that translation should not strive at word-for-word rendering of the original. This very pertinent section sets and defines translation in its historical context, drawing attention to the need for an historical consciousness of the discipline. Contextualising each case, TSR gives useful information on the difficulties that have been encountered in the course of time and how early practitioners handled them. The key argument at this stage is between classical practices: 'word for word' against 'sense for sense'. Lexical and syntactic difficulties arising from the practice, the problems of adaptation, and the linguistic and cultural assimilative aims of translation are underlined. This section is a valuable account of the infancy of translation theory: a rejection of 'word for word' and imitation.

Early in the twentieth century, translation theory focused on theoretical speculation and formal innovation. The main trends are ‘rooted in German literary and philosophical traditions, in Romanticism, hermeneutics and existential phenomenology’ (71). From 1900 to 1930, Walter Benjamin, Ezra Pound and Jorge Luis Borges are the torchbearers. Benjamin outlines ‘the Task of a Translator’. However, TSR focuses on the problems raised by Harry Zohn’s translation of Benjamin’s work. The critique of Zohn’s translation of Benjamin’s *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers* highlights the key theoretical concepts that have been argued from Horace to Dryden and beyond, reiterating that translators must not stick to the letter. Rendall raises the problem of fidelity and translator’s freedom. Looking at some of the liberties Zohn has taken in translating *Die Aufgabe*, Rendall illustrates how such liberties invert the original meaning and renders the logic of the Source Language Text (SLT) impossible to follow. He stresses that the freedom in translation which Benjamin talks of is exactly the one all translation theorists demand. Furthermore, Pound’s notion of fidelity ties the translator’s autonomy to the fact that the relationship between the two texts must be kept even if masked by the illusion of originality in Target Language (TL) terms inasmuch as the fervour of the original text is preserved. To portray translation as a formal innovation, Borges’ exemplary examination of the translators of *The Thousand and One Nights* reveals how one literary text can lead to heterogeneous TL texts depending on the translators’ literary habits and the literary traditions of the TL. This examination of Benjamin’s utopian vision of linguistic harmony, of Pound’s notion of fidelity and of Borges’ ‘happy and creative infidelity’ (p.74) marks the beginning of translation as a genre in its own right.

‘Translatability’ becomes the central issue in translation in the 1940s and ‘50s. Examining this fundamental issue, Venuti introduces Nabokov’s ‘Problems of Translation of *Onegin* in English’ where he tackles the translation of this novel written in verse and posits that translating it into rhyme is an impossibility pure and simple. He shows examples of previous attempts at this in several languages, all of which lead to mistranslations except for the French translation. Nabokov prescribes ‘footnotes and the absolute literal sense’ as a solution for handling the problems of untranslatability. Vinay and Darbelnet’s practical and pedagogical approach to translation, the cornerstone of translation studies, reproduced here, is a reminder of the methodical description and criticism of translation in the global political economy. This is very important, arming translators and students with the tools to use when faced with specific problems in translation. Jakobson refers to the dogma of untranslatability, noting the numerous intricacies in both the theory and practice of translation. Explaining intralingual, interlingual and in-

tersemiotic translations, he unfolds three ways of interpreting a verbal sign and emphasises that the cognitive aspect should be taken into consideration.

The thematic concern in translation in the decade after the 1950s is pragmatic equivalence. Nida distinguishes between dynamic/functional and formal varieties of correspondence, i.e. looking for equivalent effect in the receptor language. Reiss's argument on functional equivalence emphasises the need to base it on 'detailed semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic analysis' (149) of the foreign text, an observation gleaned from practical experience while training translators of informative texts. Also figuring here are Even-Zohar, Toury, Holmes and, most importantly, Steiner who opposes modern linguistics with literary and philosophical approaches. Even if linguists like Mounin and Catford look unto universals as a bridging factor for cultural differences, Steiner stresses how the idiosyncratic use of language makes it difficult for linguistic concepts to be universalised.

In the 1980s, '90s and beyond, translation is already an established discipline and the angles from which it is approached broaden, leading to a different conceptual framework. This comes alongside other emerging disciplines like cultural studies that clarify the social effects of translation. Through Vermeer's works, Skopos, the aim or purpose of translation is highlighted as a decisive factor in translation. Lefevere shows how translation studies significantly contribute to literary theory and play a major role in the evolution of literatures. Berman, questioning translating that deforms the foreign text through assimilation, suggests a textual analysis of translation following a comparative approach modelled on Vinay and Darbelnet. He then shows how a psychoanalytic approach can enrich this. Lewis proposes a new approach to 'fidelity', distinguishing between translating that domesticates and one that tampers with usage. Blum-Kulka illustrates how translation increases the semantic relations amongst parts of the translated text and Chamberlain explores gender issues and points out how feminist concern for gender identities is productive and helpful for translation studies. Key contributions such as Brisser's essay on 'Translation and cultural identity', Spivak's 'Politics in translation', Apiah's 'Thick translation', Harvey's 'Translating Camp talk,' Derrida's 'What is relevant in translation', Nornes' 'For an abusive subtitling', Mason's 'Transitivity and institutional cultures' and above all Venuti's 'Translation, community, Utopia' all stimulate curiosity about the cultural and political effects of translation and its role within our socio-political systems.

Venuti's TSR lends credibility to translation as a discipline with an historical basis and interconnectedness with other disciplines. The historical and thematic arrangement of TSR provides the reader with an awareness of the discourses and narratives that have

structured thinking in this field. This structure offers its readers a gamut of differing approaches. TSR is justified by the recent upsurge in undergraduate and graduate translation programs worldwide, both as training for professionals and as a research discipline. For all scholars, teachers and practitioners of Translation, Venuti's TSR is by far the most complete anthology of theoretical reflections and considerations on translation currently available.

TSR is equally a useful guide for all communication specialists interested in intercultural communication as it brings forth numerous examples of problems of intercultural communication and solutions to overcome them. Helping the reader follow the thoughts and development linked to translation, this masterpiece portrays what is intelligible and interesting in translation culture.

Review by William Ndi, University of Queensland and University of the Sunshine Coast.