

Book Review

CRITICAL READING IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

Edited by Mona Baker

Routledge: London and New York 2010 xi-xiv pp.508.

The editor of this collection of papers is probably one of the most eminent scholars in the field of translation. Her best selling course book on translation, *In Other Words* has been through numerous reprints since first published in 1992. Its success has no doubt been due to the need for a systematic approach to training in translation by drawing mainly on systemic functional theories of linguistics. This present volume of *Critical Readings in Translation Studies* has been dedicated to the late John Sinclair, one of principle architects in developing a more functional approach as to how both lexis and grammar play a role in understanding language as used in society.

Baker in her Introduction sets her 'stall' out very clearly when she writes:

The literature in translation studies has traditionally been preoccupied with elaborating various types of dichotomies and taxonomies, and to some extent much of it still is.

This is a reference to two of the dominant theories in translation studies: Toury's Norm Theory (1995) and Venuti (1993) with his theory of 'foreignising' and 'domesticating' (see Zhong Fangyuan in this volume).

For Baker, translation as part of human behaviour is too complex to be seen as a stable set of choices that can be tied to specific textual features. Thus, the contributions have been selected to explore new ground rather than pay tribute to past achievements. It is meant to provide pointers towards the future and open up the fields to innovative concepts as well as having

perspectives from a wider range of traditions, beyond the dominant Anglo-Saxon world.

There are 25 articles in this volume, each preceded by a summary, followed by questions for discussion and recommended further readings. There are 10 sections:

1. Politics and the dynamics of representation
2. Modes and strategies: the language(s) of translation
3. Text, discourse and ideology
4. The voice of authority: institutional settings and alliances
5. Individual voice and positionality
6. Minority issues: cultural identity and survival
7. Translation in world systems
8. The making of literary traditions
9. Translation and war
10. Changing landscapes: new media and technology.

Most of the themes running through the collection are reflected in the titles indicated above and are discussed in the introductory summaries in each section. However several themes cut across these sections such as the following:

The negotiation of dominance and resistance in many acts of translation and interpreting where streamlined accounts of unidirectional influence and absolute dominance fail to reflect the complexity of the encounters they examine.

There is the shifting and ongoing positioning of translators and interpreters and the unease which can be caused by those that rely on their services.

There is the interplay of power, ideology and mediation and the extent to which the translators feed on their current beliefs and goals in processing a text.

Another theme that cuts across the sections is the relationship between minority groups, globalization and the power of English, and the role that translation plays in suppressing or resisting this power.

Finally there is the ‘ethics’ of translation and interpreting, and the moral dilemmas involved in attempting to ‘do right’ by the parties involved in the interaction: the source author and culture and the target reader and culture or the various parties in an interpreted encounter.

It is fairly obvious from this brief summary that there is a rich source of information for any student of translation or interpreting in this volume. The complexity of translation which Baker often refers to is manifest in the different contributions. Such a collection might well be ‘dipped into’ according to the interests of the reader rather than read from cover to cover. However, there is also the temptation to read to gain more information about the diverse approaches that are possible in translation and interpretation. Perhaps more importantly it might be to see how future perspectives are breaking away from the canon that currently defines translation studies.

References

- Baker, M. 2008. *In Other Words: a course book for translation*. London and New York Routledge.
- Toury, G. 1995. *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Venuti L. 1993. Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English . *Textual Practice* 7: 208-223.

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