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## Book Review

**Critical Readings in Translation Studies, Edited by  
M. Baker (2010), Routledge,  
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### 1. Introduction

Translation studies, having been based for a long time on linguistic and textual frameworks, since the 1990s, scholars of translation studies got more conscious of the contextual variables and cultural constructs that influence and are influenced by both the translation as a process and a product. As Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) in their seminal book which marks the cultural turn in translation studies state, “there is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed” (p. 11). With translation, having a place in

more than one culture, the matter of clarity of meaning in translated text has been a challenging issue which has both elevated the position of translation as a powerful instrument in socio-cultural, ideological, and political equations in local and global settings, and has dethroned the convenience of equivalence and complicated the comprehension of translation as a text carrying the same message as in the original text, yet in a different language.

*Critical Readings in Translation Studies* (2010) is a reader edited by Mona Baker who is professor of Translation Studies and director of the Center for Translation and Intercultural

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Studies at the University of Manchester, England. Apart from the twenty-five papers, each in a chapter, including one written by the editor herself, the collection consists of an introduction, alphabetized reference list of the sources used, the name index, and the subject index. The papers are described by the editor as an “integrated and structured set of readings that is prospective rather than retrospective in orientation” (p. xi), and they are divided into ten thematic divisions, which cover most of the major socio-political, cultural, ideological, and technological issues and turns in translation studies. The ten divisions are under the following titles: 1. Politics and Dynamics of Representation (two papers), 2. Modes and Strategies: The Language(s) of Translation (two papers), 3. Text, Discourse, and Ideology (three papers), 4. The Voice of Authority: Institutional Settings and Alliances (three papers), 5. Individual Voice and Positionality (three papers), 6. Minority Issues: Cultural Identity and Survival (two papers), 7. Translation in World Systems (two papers), 8. The Making of Literary Traditions (three papers), 9. Translation and War (two papers), and 10. Changing Landscapes: New Media and Technologies (three papers). In every chapter, the article is preceded by an editorial introduction, including a key excerpt from the paper, a summary in few succinct paragraphs, a set of follow-up questions tailored as feed for class discussions, and finally a short list of recommended sources for further reading.

## **2. Part I: Politics and Dynamics of Representation**

In a seminal article as the first paper under the first part, ‘The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology’, Talal Asad discusses the notion of cultural translation that anthropologists have used for long time to describe their work—a concept which, despite rife controversies, Pym (2010) would like to recognize as a legitimate theoretical paradigm in translation studies. Asad criticizes the implication that the cultural translator is

capable of reading and revealing the implicit meanings in native people’s utterances. He argues that the process of cultural translation unavoidably entails conditions of professional, national and international power. He indicates that the anthropologists often come from a powerful culture and address a dominantly English-speaking scholarly readership and typically “translate” smaller cultures and often illiterate people. Such “cultural translation” results in a textual construct that can hardly be contested by those whom the translator writes about. That is because translation is considered a scientific text and due to the culturally powerful status that the ethnographer holds. Asad insists that it is not personal but the social authority of ethnography that matters, as the textual product may get retranslated and return to a Third World culture and influence the mechanism of self-representation within the culture in question. The second article, ‘Packaging “Huda”: Sha’rawi’s Memoirs in the United States Reception Environment’, authored by Mohja Kahf mainly discusses that in terms of Arab and Muslim women, the American public readers extensively relies on a long standing Western stereotypes: victim of gender oppression, escapee of her essentially oppressive culture, and as the pawn of Arab or Muslim male members’ power. She traces the historical developments of such stereotypes and notes that, for example, the image of an Iranian supporting the Islamic revolution in Iran has complicated the picture. Kahf believes that neither all the Western writers are necessarily completely guilty in generating such representation, nor Arab and Muslim men and women are perfectly innocent of such distorted image.

## **3. Part II: Modes and Strategies: The Language(s) of Translation**

The third paper, ‘Writing between the Lines: The Language of Translation’, under the second part is written by John Sturrock. His paper begins with various kinds of *en face* translation—translated texts that printed side

by side with the source texts. Two advantages of such translations are that on the one hand they bring the original texts into the attention of the target text readers, and on the other hand, they ensure a distinction between the source and target texts, where they are likely to be mixed into one. On the contrary, the interlinear format—in which the translation appears between the lines often in different typeface, allowing the source text to shine through—the translation is presented more as a process. In the following, advocating literalism as ethical, he discerns the type interlinear translation of which he approves, a type which is not condescendingly primitive, and avoids naturalizing the source text without any traces of the original. Lawrence Venuti's 'Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English', centers around the target culture in translation. Venuti argues that translation is fundamentally violent as it involves reconstructing the foreign text based on the beliefs and values of the target culture and rules of the target language. He favors a foreignizing method, which pressures the domestic values to accommodate the cultural and linguistic dissimilarities of the source text, over a domesticating method, in which the foreign text is forced to accommodate the values of target culture. Subsequently, he describes as in elsewhere (e.g., Venuti, 2004) and disapproves of the Anglo-American dominant tradition of domesticating method of translation. He recommends for the American culture that translations need to entail discontinuities at the levels of syntax, lexicon, and discourse in the target text, in order to make it possible for the translation to be read as translation.

#### **4. Part III: Text, Discourse, and Ideology**

The fifth paper as the first of part three, entitled 'Discourse, Ideology and Translation' is written by Ian Mason. To him, ideology is a set of shared values and beliefs which are indicative of individuals' or institutions' world views, and helps them make sense of what

happens around them. He defines discourse as a set of organized language utterances or statements which manifests the ideologies of individuals or institutions. He illustrates how ideology controls translatorial decisions at conscious or subconscious levels, which in turn can lead to systematic ideological shifts in the translated text. He admits that the translator may commit such manipulations unwittingly, that the divergent translation is not essentially derived from the intents of the translator. She later demonstrates that these ideological shifts can take place at various discourse categories. A fuller discussion of how and what discourse levels may accommodate indications to ideological representations is found in van Dijk (1998). The next paper, Abé Mark Nornes's "'Poru Ruta"/Paul Rotha and the Politics of Translation', is a case study, drawing on travelling theory (Said, 1991, pp. 226-247). The paper first clarifies the socio-political setting in Japan in which the book in analysis, Paul Rotha's work on documentary film, was translated. In addition to examination of a number of other translatorial decisions, the translation of the title of the book is examined in detail, and the consequent political outcomes of such rendition are discussed. The paper explores a spectrum of changes in different editions of the translation, delineating why the book enjoys such a high status among the Japanese critics. 'Reframing Conflict in Translation', in chapter seven is the contribution of the editor of this reader. To design an approach to the study of translation and interpreting which aims at the marginal as well as the mainstream, Mona Baker draws on the narrative theory. She discusses some of the advantages of such an approach in comparison with the current approaches for the time being, and that, for instance, this approach makes it possible to both consider the narrative related in the text in translation (or interpreting), as well as to consider the global narratives which accommodate the text in question—and this facilitates to see how every individual translational challenges and choices made are

contributing to the narratives which shape the global picture. Likewise, she introduces the notion of framing in translation, and that how every different narrator frames a narrative differently. Eventually, she concludes that translators and interpreters make use of various strategies aiming at palpable socio-political ends rather than abstract principles.

#### **5. Part IV: The Voice of Authority: Institutional Settings and Alliances**

The eighth chapter under part 4 is 'The Registration Interview: Restricting Refugees' Narrative Performance'. Marco Jacquemet in this unique empirical study explores the role of the interpreters in registration interviews conducted by UNHCR when the hostilities ended in 2000 in Albania. Jacquemet investigates the strategies and tactics which the UNHCR caseworkers and interpreters use, to stop or prevent the refugees from relating their narratives, during the interview sessions with the asylum seekers. Chapter nine includes 'The Interpreter as Institutional Gatekeeper: The Social-linguistic Role of Interpreters in Spanish-English Medical Discourse' written by Brad Davidson. Based on the analysis of the data collected in the public and private hospital settings in the United States, the paper, congruent with the findings of Jacquemet's in the previous chapter, indicates to the tendency of the interpreters to aligning their practice with the institutional interests. Hephzibah Israel in her paper, 'Translating the Bible in Nineteenth-Century India: Protestant Missionary Translation and the Standard Tamil Version', investigates the production of a standard Tamil version of the Bible by the Bible Society in India in two centuries ago. Concentrating on the Protestant community, her analysis shows that certain parts of the Tamil community cooperated with the translation project, not out of conviction or even fear, but to serve their own local purposes and to challenge the dominant colonial structures.

#### **6. Part V: Individual Voice and Positionality**

Theo Hermans' paper on the discursive presence of translator in translated fiction, beginning the fifth part, is entitled 'The Translator's Voice in Translated Narrative'. In this article, Hermans sheds light on and, then using the example of several translations of a Dutch novel, demonstrates how the translator's voice breaks through the univocal structure of the narrative and why the translator's presence emerges in the translated discourse beyond the pseudo restraints of transparency. The twelfth article, 'Ideology and the Position of the Translator: In What Sense is a Translator 'In Between'?' by Maria Tymoczko, is a widely-quoted reference which further analyzes the concept of ideology in translation and ideology of translating from a critical perspective. She argues that not only is ideology of translated discourse manifest in the text, but also in the voice and stance that the translator assumes. She criticizes the popular concept of translation as an *in between* space as if it were an elsewhere which is different from both the source and translated cultures. She explains why this metaphor is of current popularity, one of which is the influence of poststructuralism on translation studies literature. She concludes that translators "become all too involved in divergent ideologies, programs of change, or agendas of subversion .... The ideology of translation is indeed a result of translator's position, but that position is not a space between" (p. 226). The next chapter is entitled 'National Sovereignty versus Universal Rights: Interpreting Justice in a Global Context'. This qualitative study by Moira Inghilleri takes advantage of interview data from adjudicators, solicitors, interpreters, and interpreter coordinators in the context of British political asylum system or "the roughest of the rough games". The analysis of the data demonstrates that the participants had no vivid understanding the role that is necessary to be played by the interpreting agents in the asylum process and they are not

fully certain of the limits of their role. Despite the significance objectivity on their part, the interpreters knew that they could hardly distance themselves from subjective engagements and their own backgrounds and (similar) experiences by some means influenced their assessments. She contends that the role play by interpreters in this context is substantially restrained by sources of power beyond their control.

### **7. Part VI: Minority Issues: Cultural Identity and Survival**

Part 6 commences with the fourteenth paper, Michael Cronin's 'The Cracked Looking Glass of Servants: Translation and Minority Languages in a Global Age'. In this paper, he criticizes the meager research attention paid to several aspects of the concept of minority in translation studies, for instance, the lack of interest to concede that scholars working with minority languages may have distinct experiences and different perspectives, or failure to consider and incorporate the conceptual contributions from minority languages in anthologies of translation studies. A fault that the present reader, thanks to Mona Baker, is completely free from, as the collection comprises empirical studies and conceptual contributions by scholars working on a variety of languages and from diverse cultural backgrounds. A critical argument made by Cronin is that in order for minority languages to survive, they need to have presence in all areas and disciplines including technical and scientific, which would be mostly possible through translation, and their limitation to literary and aesthetic textual products is insufficient. Next is 'Locating Power: Corsican Translators and Their Critics' is authored by Alexandra Jaffe. The paper in the fifteen chapter centers on an intense debate in Corsican literary circles, resulting from rendition of a French novel into Corsican—from a language of Power to an language of limited diffusion—by a Corsican translator. Concerning how such a translation could turn

into a political act, the debate, beyond the linguistic and literary circles, reached the public and attracted considerable media attention. In the following, Jaffe discusses how diglossia can help keep a hierarchical yet oppositional power relation in balance. That is the local language, Corsican, has been reduced to be only used in informal occasions, while French is used as the official medium of instruction in education and dominant public life. Jaffe discusses that the translation gave the Corsicans to activate a large portion of elements of oral language in writing since for long they were limited to the casual spoken Corsican.

### **8. Part VII: Translation in World Systems**

The sixteenth paper, 'Consecration and Accumulation of Literary Capital. Translation as Unequal Exchange', written by Pascale Casanova and translated into English by Siobhan Brownlie is the first chapter of the seventh part. The paper draws on a model which is based on the notion of accumulated symbolic, cultural, economical, or social prestige introduced by Bourdieu, also known as capital. Later on, in terms of literary field, she discusses dominating languages—those in which substantial texts are writing in, and so enjoy high cultural prestige—and dominated languages which either, are short of a recognized system of writing (e.g., Yorouba, in West Africa), have short-lived history of language use (e.g., Hebrew), are spoken in statistically smaller countries (e.g., Persian), or those major languages with major long history and established literary traditions that are not as highly recognized as they should be by the international literary communities (e.g., Chinese). Subsequently, she classifies four different situations as for the relationships between the dominated and dominating languages, the author and the translator, on which the significance of a translated product relies on. The second paper in this chapter is entitled 'Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-

System'. The focus of Johan Heilbron's paper is on the role of translation in relation to the ways of dissemination of intellectual works globally. The basic hypothesis tested and supported in this study was that the more a language enjoys a large share of the number of translated books internationally, the more central a position it occupies in the translation world system.

### 9. Part VIII: The Making of Literary Traditions

The eighteenth paper allotted under part eight is authored by Samah Selim and is entitled 'Pharaoh's Revenge: Translation, Literary History and Colonial Ambivalence'. Critically reviewing the normative models of literary history, the Selim argues that European society has always taken advantage of translation in attempts to gain authenticity and legitimacy in terms of its political agenda. On the other hand, Selim introduces an alternative model of literary practice by examining an Arabic translation of an Edwardian bestselling novel about ancient Egypt. 'Translation's Challenge to Critical Categories: Verses from French in the Early English Renaissance', is the next article in this chapter by A. E. B. Coldiron. This paper critically challenges the running presuppositions regarding the roots and causes of the English Renaissance poetry. The four groups of French-derived poetry in translation examined by Coldiron have critical implications for an accurate historical account of English poetry. The twentieth paper, 'Engendered by Translation: Modern Japanese Literature, Vernacular Style, and the Westernesque Femme Fatale', is written by Indra Levy. The paper sets out to describe how the modern Japanese literature began with translation. It then mainly explores various aspects and impacts and criticisms of a new literary language, *genbun-itchi* style created by Futabatei Shimei, translator, novelist, and progenitor of Japanese literary modernity. Futabatei Shimei believed in the language of truth as an ultimate priority over aesthetic

value in fiction. Levy, using a variety of examples, describes the particulars of this language.

### 10. Part IX: Translation and War

'Translation in Wartime', is the twenty-first paper of the collection and is written by Vicente Rafael. The paper initially discusses a statement made by former US president, George W. Bush on the country's dire need for translators of so-called critical languages such as Arabic, Farsi, and Chinese to support the US national security. It is discussed that how translation can be a tool of empowerment, and that it is even more than a mere instrument of imperial power but in fact is a form of power for that matter. With reference to the recent wars in Iraq, he reviews the contextually contradicting positions of translators and interpreters in this situation in which while they are instrumental in fighting insurgents, they are feared as probable ones. The paper is concluded by indicating to the analogous relationship of war and translation with reference to their shared temporality. *Translation and Conflict* by (Baker, 2006) is a recommended source for further reading on the subject. The other paper in this part, 'War, Translation, Transnationalism: Interpreters in and of the War (Croatia 1991-1992)', is authored by Zrinka Stahuljak. The paper is a research report which draws mainly on the data derived from interviews by a psychologist in 1993 from the interpreters who were working for European Community Monitor Mission (ECMM) during the war in Croatia. The paper offers a diverse and vast account of interpreting in war zones with particular focus on the violent conflict that the interpreters had to undertake. On the one hand, they were willing to assume a witness position for ECMM while interpreting, and on the other hand, for professional reasons they had to accept that they could not testify of any kind. Stahuljak differentiates between the intervention in source message in usual circumstances and the intervention during

interpreting war zones. The paper explains that the Croatian interpreters would switch positions between the role of interpreters for the official witnesses and unofficial witnesses who could express personal opinions outside the framework of interpreting job.

### **11. Part X: Changing Landscapes: New Media and Technologies**

'Machine Translation and Global English', is the twenty-third paper in the collection and the first of the last part. This paper by Rita Raley is a discussion of the current status of machine translation. The paper begins and continues with aspects of the vision of Warren Weaver in terms of the design of a computer that would translate. Raley invites scholars of translation studies, cross-cultural communication, and translational literary studies to intervene in the matter as machine translation might very well function in all discourses including literary. After the mainstream advances in machine translation, the paper discusses the influences of the new technology in promoting English in global environments of various intricacies which are challenges by the barrier of language. Raley, in the end, reminds and warns against a possible minimalism in the use of language which seems inevitable in a machine-based communication. Karen Littau's paper, 'Translation in the Age of Postmodern Production: From Text to Intertext to Hypertext', is the twenty-fourth chapter of the book. The paper tries to make two main points. On the one hand, it tries to show how, "what remains a call for translator's visibility in Lawrence Venuti's and Barbara Godard's writings can become a reality in the virtual reality of the hypertext" (p. 437). On the other hand, "since computer technology can make visible the entire production history of a text, it can literally undermine the hierarchical separation between the so-called main text and its versions, thus redressing the balance between the uniqueness and variation, as well as reconfiguring our conceptions of authorship, originality and, as we shall see, of

translation" (p. 437). The author subsequently, concludes that the visibility of the translator practically takes place only in the hypertext environment in contrast to the text proper in which the visibility of the translator can only realize in footnotes or the like. 'A New Line in the Geometry' by Eric Cazdyn concludes the chapters of this far-reaching reader in translation studies. The paper centers on and introduces a rather new technology, now widespread in the news media, the running subtitle. Started to frequent the television screens first at the first Gulf War and then September 11, running subtitle, "the termite text gnawing" (p. 451) across the bottom of the screen, is not the transcript of the news heard, nor does it necessarily pertain to the main content of the broadcast unlike a traditional subtitle. The paper also examines the question of quality and the choice of subtitle on a video of Bin Laden speaking to associates about 9/11 on December 13, 2001 used by Bush administration as proof to the responsibility of Al-Qaeda for the bombings. The subtitle is always running ahead of the central content of the broadcast, and Cazdyn concludes by discussing that the subtitle is to the speed of the global and the central content to the speed of the national.

### **12. Concluding Remarks**

This volume, away from the usual "big" names in translation studies, provides junior scholars with a wide-ranging overview of the most recent developments in reflecting on translation as well as indications to prospective research directions. The book addresses all the major forms of written, oral, technical, sensitive, and literary translation, as well as machine and audiovisual translation. Considering the design and organization of each chapter, the reader is a student-friendly collection which covers pivotal material from authors from both within and outside translation studies and from a variety of cultural backgrounds, languages, and academic disciplines.

One other advantageous feature present in this edited collection is that, unlike most others at such a level, the reader has taken interest in empirical research besides theoretical articles. Several chapters include papers that draw on empirical designs in which conclusions and conceptual contributions are based on the analysis of collected data. A review of the main stream literature in translation studies appears to suggest that there is room for a larger proportion of empirical research which applies and tests the ever-increasing theories on various aspects of translation. Chesterman (1998) writes that in recent developments in translation studies “the most important trend has been the shift from philosophical conceptual analysis towards empirical research” (p. 201).

Considering the pedagogical application of this reader, the incorporation of empirical papers would certainly serve as an effective reminder of the position and essentiality of empiricism in translation studies. Pym (2009) argues that “repetition of theoretical propositions without empirical application leads to some unhelpful pieces of philosophy” (p. 28) and that “anything that theories say should be tested on some kind of non-theory, quantitatively or qualitatively (p. 38). This book encourages and validates empirical studies as contributing and yielding as conceptual philosophy by their inclusion in a world-level publication, and that is to be appreciated and followed.

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