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POETRY TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: Poetic translation" is occasionally used instead of "poetry translation" to refer to a text, or producing a text, that functions as a poem in the target language, or which uses poetic language. This roughly equates to "re-creative" translation as explained below, though it shades into "adaptation"/etc. To avoid confusion with the much broader concept of poetry translation, I do not use the term "poetic translation".

INTRODUCTION

Some languages have different words for "translation" and "free/adaptive poetry translation": for example, German Übersetzung–Nachdichtung, or Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian prevod–prepev / prijevod–prepjev. English does not. This is perhaps fortunate, as both are arguably acts of translation, and both are covered here.

After a short history of poetry translation, this article describes poetry's key textual and extratextual features. The next section, Attitudes and approaches, looks at social attitudes towards poetry translation: the notion that poetry gets "lost in translation", and the fact that poetry translators are highly visible. It then surveys overall approaches to poetry translation: literal cribs and interlinears; "re-creatively" conveying the source poem's message in a target-language poem; adaptations/versions/imitations; poems inspired by other-language poems; and pseudo-translations. It also discusses debates within the re-creative approach: source versus target orientation; creativity; plus whether to convey source-poem fixed form – and if so, how. Finally, poetry-translation norms are mentioned.

The following two sections describe translating processes, plus how translated poetry is brought to audiences and how it is read. Discussion then turns to translators' skills, motivations and emotions, plus questions of loyalty and identity. The article subsequently addresses how poetry translators work with others: in a project team with people like an editor, a publisher and/or a source poet; and collaboratively, in a multi-translator grouping involving a source poet, one or more target-language poets, and/or one or more cross-language experts. There follows an overview of the social context that poetry translators and teams work in: the vocational "field" of poetry translators; remuneration, accreditation and training; and poetry translators' social status. An overview of the publishing market for translated poetry follows, plus a discussion of how poetry translations have influenced target-language poetry, translation theory and the target language itself. After this, relationships between poetry translation and macro-social concepts such as culture or nation are explored.

Finally, the article mentions areas of poetry translation worthy of future research, and relevant research methods.

The nature of poetic text makes it challenging to translate, which has stimulated much debate about how these challenges should be tackled. This entry describes these issues, plus the skills, working processes and professional conditions involved in translating poetry. Arabic views have been expressed in this respect. Al-Jahedh, for instance, believes that poetry is untranslatable; in case it is translated, its meter will be distorted, its tone disturbed and pleasure disappears. This view stems from the fact that each language has its own poetic meters and music.Verse Translation vs. Prose TranslationShould we, then, refrain from translating poetry, or should we attempt at translating it irrespective of all precautions? The second view is advocated here for if poetry is left inaccessible to translation, mankind would be deprived of a huge number of poetic works which are masterpieces themselves.One may wonder whether the translation be in verse or prose. A variety of views have been proposed in this regard. Theodore Savoy in his book The Art of Translation, 1968, mentions some of these views. He says that people such as Carlyle, Leigh Hunt and Professor Postates believe that poetry cannot be translated into a form other than poetry, for its aesthetic impact is expressed through meter. Others such as Mathew Arnold and Helaire Belloc expressed the possibility of translating poetry into prose for a prose form can still have its poetic essence.It is supposed here that since poetry has its distinctive features, it cannot be rendered into pure prose. The poet is mainly concerned with the connotative force of words. The translation of poetry into poetry entails preserving the rhyme, figurative language and the general tone of the original. This cannot be achieved unless the translator has a special talent and introspection.

Some poetic translations, so deep and original, have impressed readers in the other languages. Few of the translated versions have been deemed even more illuminating than the original.

The difficulty of poetic translation leads many to think that the translator of poetry must himself be a poet otherwise he should not dare to square the circle! There appeared also other attempts to translate poetry into rhythmic prose. Khalil Mutran, for instance, translated some of Shakespeare's plays applying rhythmic prose. Yet, pure prose translations are not recommended as much of the music of poetry is lost. To conclude, poetry can be translated by those who have deep interest in poetry and who possess the poetic feel and sensation, in addition to their mastery of the other language.

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Its first issue was a landmark. Writers previously unknown to the West were introduced by Hughes and Weissbort. The list included Miroslav Holub, Yehuda Amichai, Ivan Lalić, Zbigniew Herbert, Czesław Miłosz (who would later win the Nobel Prize in Literature), Andrei Voznesensky, and Vasko Popa (later written of as "one of the best European poets writing today" by literary critic John Bayley of Oxford University in an essay in The New York Review of Books on a translation of Popa by Anne Pennington with an introduction by Ted Hughes in "The Persea Series of Poetry in Translation," general editor Daniel Weissbort).[3]

Founder and editor Weissbort headed The University of Iowa translation workshop program for decades.[4] Of his many books, Weissbort edited Translation: Theory and Practice: A Historical Reader that was published by the Oxford University Press,[5] edited with Astradur Eysteinsson.[6] The London Guardian[7] newspaper wrote that Weissbort founded Carcanet Press.[8][9] The Wall Street Journal[10] excerpted a Weissbort translation of Missing Person[11] by Patrick Modiano[12] after Modiano received the Nobel Prize for Literature.[13]

On the Stanford University site of The Book Haven by Cynthia Haven, in an obituary of Daniel Weissbort, Daniel Weissbort is defined as a "master translator."[14] Also on this Stanford University web site, Weissbort is called a champion of translation.[14] Weissbort has genius in translation, obituary of Weissbort in Translationista.[15]

To celebrate the magazine's 50th anniversary, a microsite was developed to present the first issue of Modern Poetry in Translation in its entirety, including high resolution scans of the original print document. The microsite was expanded to a full website at www.modernpoetryintranslation.com in 2018. The original anniversary microsite, and first issue, is available at modernpoetryintranslation.com/home-50 via the Wayback Machine.[16]

From 2012 to 2017 Sasha Dugdale was the editor of Modern Poetry in Translation, overseeing a redesign and publishing sixteen issues of the magazine as well as its fiftieth year anniversary anthology Centres of Cataclysm (Bloodaxe, 2016). Clare Pollard was editor from 2017 to 2022. From issue No. 3 2022 (Wrap It in Banana Leaves: The Food Focus) the editor has been Khairani Barokka.[17]

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