

Three points - Feminist Translators - Positionality - Interculture

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After reading through the reams of material that have been posted over the last few days, I am glad that information and commentary on specific translators/translation situations is surfacing (the translator in the Hawaiian courtroom). Long «theoretical» texts that discuss «the translator» or «translation» as though they were entities that can be taken out of their specific contexts and generalized about get a little tiresome...

1. On subversions of texts or text situations that are actually verifiable and not just thinkable (as in the anecdote on the translation of the Japanese term), people might consider feminist translators' activities. This is a case where the context of feminist political action, a broad grass-roots women's movement, and massive interest in and therefore translation of women's writing caused a «feminist translator» to emerge, and to fashion herself as a (pro)active, self-confident, powerfully subversive manipulator of texts who draws attention to her work and the influence she has and exerts as a rewriter. The translations and essays of women such as Susanne de Lotbiniere-Harwood and Barbara Godard in Canada or Diane Rayor, Carol Maier, Sharon Bell in the USA are good examples of translators taking a clearly political stance and either 'subverting' a text they find problematic, or simply demonstrating the empower-

ment that translators can derive from a particular political/cultural movement.

2. These and other women working in feminist scholarship and translation have also addressed the «translating subject» (one of Pym's topics, I think). They do not generalize about all translation, or all translators, however, but start from the particular context of feminist activism, feminist responsibility and the self-assurance that comes with participating in and being supported by a relatively powerful group in contemporary Anglo-American culture. One of the terms that is important is the 'positionality' of the translator (or writer, or theorist) —Michael Cronin referred to it briefly— in other words that person's position in a particular culture (what is the status of a translator at that particular time? and is the translator perhaps also an academic? a writer? etc.), the position they themselves assume (are they confident and activist? do they work within a certain political framework? for or against or just in sympathy with a particular cause? are they relatively independent?), and do they declare their position?

I think analyses of translators' situations and contexts along these more limited lines may be more productive and more interesting than theorizing about «the translator» as some kind of monolithic entity.

3. About intercultural: The «divided» cities of the world may be a place to observe and research intercultural —I wonder whether residents of Jerusalem or Montreal or Berlin or Nikosia could describe living in intercultural environments where at least two languages are useful/necessary. (In Berlin it would not be an exaggeration to talk about two languages).

Big multicultural centres such as New York or Los Angeles or Vancouver may also be centers of intercultural, especially when the once dominant Anglo/European residents are quietly yet continuously being displaced by «visible minorities».

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[Final] statistical and geographical distribution [data] of participants in TRANSFER-L:

(.edu) [presumably USA] 26, (.com) [could be anywhere] 19, Canada (.ca), Spain (.es) 18, Brazil (.br) 11, (.net) ... 8, Australia (.au) 7, Sweden (.se), UK (.uk) 5, Italy (.it), South Africa (.za) 4, Netherlands (.nl), Portugal (.pt) 3

Belgium (.be), France (.fr), Greece (.gr), Ireland (.ie), Yugoslavia (.yu) 2

Armenia (.am), Argentina (.ar), Chile (.cl), China (.cn), Germany (.de), Denmark (.dk), Finland (.fi), Hungary (.hr), Iceland (.id), (.int), Korea (.kr), Luxembourg (.lu), Malaysia (.my), (.org), Poland (.pl), Turkey (.tr), Taiwan (.tw) 1