

Mary Snell-Hornby, Franz Pöchhacker and Klaus Kaindl eds, *Translation Studies - An Interdiscipline*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1994 (= Benjamins Translation Library, vol. 2). ISBN 90 272 2141 3 (Eur.) / 1-55619-478-1 (US). viii + 439 pp.

Those who attended the 1992 conference in Vienna remember it as big, very well organized and crowned by the foundation meeting of the European Society for Translation Studies. The conference also marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Vienna Institute of Translation and Interpreting, making these published proceedings a very appropriate *Festschrift* for the institute.

The volume is trilingual (17 texts in German; three in French; the rest in English, in many cases by Germanic authors) and has no weak articles. It contains 44 of the 163 papers read at the conference. This can only mean that more than a hundred papers had to be excluded (necessarily, since the book is still far too big to be covered in a review like this one). A selection process was obviously necessary. But what were the criteria by which the papers were selected? How has some of our work managed to gain exposure and perhaps an ounce of scholarly authority? And what might the application of such criteria have to say about the current state of translation studies? My interest here is in reading the editing as a discourse, as anything but the invisible and authoritative process of exclusion that it too often remains.

The selection was ostensibly informed by the editors' desire to present "a structured and cohesive whole" (ix). Lessons are then drawn from the structure and cohesion that remain. The conference section on "Linguistics and Translation", for example, has completely disappeared from the proceedings because it "did not yield enough material", a fact considered "significant for the present development of Translation Studies" (ix). Yet my reading of the conference program comes up with about 28 papers that make explicit reference to linguistics in a strict sense. This could be significant in view of José Lambert's argument, in this same volume, that "it is hard not to include the linguistic component in the cultural view of translation" (18). And yet the editors have not wanted to see these papers as significant, and in some cases have quite simply placed them in other sections (notably Terminology and Training).

Similar comparisons might be more telling. Germanic contributions, for example, account for only 29% of the conference program but fill 52% of the proceedings. Does this indicate where the most structured and cohesive work is being done these days? Or does it say something about the cultural location of the selection criteria?

In the same vein, many of the more theoretical or philosophical papers presented at the conference have magically disappeared. The significant exceptions are a handful of strong Germanic texts that give the volume a certain institutional orientation. Vermeer

points the way by reciting the basics of *Skopostheorie* plus something about progress that I fail to understand (it sounds like Harold Bloom on misprision, but would Vermeer really care?). Other names associated with *Skopostheorie* score par for the course, although two, at least, significantly extend and dissent. Margret Ammann finds that Schleiermacher, Sartre and Vermeer all agree that meaning is an individual creation, so they must all be right. For Ammann, this means theory must recognize the individual meanings of individual translators (bad luck for anyone interested in politics, social groups or science as study of the general). Franz Pöchhacker similarly twinkles when he insists that the *Skopos* principle of purpose-determined translating cannot fully apply to simultaneous interpreting, since the outgoing text contains elements of the source text (as Derrida said, “plus d’une langue”, but that’s once again from another world). With a little more courage, both Ammann and Pöchhacker could have traced such comparisons and cracks through to the foundational tautologies of *Skopostheorie*. But one wonders how far they really want to go. The institutional doctrine remains and can even appear productive by spawning intelligent critique.

Much of the rest is as solid as it is unexciting, although a few miscellaneous contributions look exciting at the expense of solidity. A request: Could texts on “postmodern translation” (there are two) please define the term? And a call for calm: Klaus Kaindl sounds like a naughty boy when he says translation criticism does not require the original text, apparently inviting us to some kind of party. But translation without an original sounds fine to me. It’s the essence of pseudotranslations. All dressed up and nowhere to go?

One of the more fruitful tendencies revealed by the volume is the increasing use of empirical methods, by which I mean any of the questionnaires or protocols through which scholars are going out into the world to discover what translation actually is or does. Some five studies of this kind are included and several other articles argue strongly for the development of empirical research. If presented at a conference in the exact sciences, however, I suspect that more than one of these studies would be laughed out of court or at least down to the end of the poster stands. Ingrid Kurz arouses real curiosity when using EEG probability mapping to formulate hypotheses about the mental processes of simultaneous interpreting, but would any serious empiricist go to publication after experiments on just one subject who interpreted in silence? A further study surveys what medical experts think of translation experts (everyone’s an expert these days), all of which comes to naught as soon as we discover that none of the medical experts had actually used translators. Tiina Puurtinen presents an empirical study of the “acceptability” of translated children’s books, only to find that “the initial definition of acceptability [...] proved to be too simplified” (89). This is a significant confession that could be projected onto several other studies. In general, many attempts

at empirical research suffer from a lack of conceptual planning around falsifiable hypotheses able to turn statistics into knowledge. We seem to be accumulating little more than numbers and presuppositions, perhaps to the detriment of a properly critical vision. The great risk, of course, is that some researchers believe that the conceptual elaboration simply has to be borrowed from parent disciplines like cognitive psychology (as in articles by Birgit Stolz and Michèle Kaiser-Cooke), without properly asking if Translation Studies, as something more than a minor field of application, could produce major ideas itself.

Despite the editors' search for structure and cohesion, some of the more enlightening papers are on subjects that are somewhat lost in the context. Margareta Bowen makes an exemplary contribution to translation history when presenting research into how translators worked in the negotiations to end the 1898 Spanish-American war. And perhaps the most useful and stimulating piece in the entire volume is Brian Mossop's "Goals and methods for a course in translation theory", which provides exactly what it promises.

As might be gathered from the above comments, the range of contributions is impressively wide and fully justifies Gideon Toury's view of Translation Studies as an "interdiscipline", a discipline that overlaps with many others. And yet the editors' desire for a particular orientation, particularly as expressed in the order of presentation and the prominence of research done in Germany and Austria, remains subtly manipulative. Perhaps this is ultimately unimportant. Most readers will no doubt only read the articles of interest to them, and the *Festschrift* is Vienna's party after all. But there is something else at stake here, something that appears in the volume's closing article and warrants a paragraph to itself.

A special workshop at the conference, reported in the proceedings by Doina Motas, Jennifer Williams and Mary Snell-Hornby, focused on the needs and problems of translator training in eastern Europe. The topic is timely and necessary, especially considering the geographical location of Vienna (and indeed of Prague, the venue for the first conference of the European Society for Translation Studies). These proceedings are inevitably inscribed in a certain expertise transfer, apparently from west to east, since no mention is made of possible movements in the other direction. East-European readers are advised, for example, that they should "cut the umbilical cord with the Modern Language departments as soon as possible" (433), as if most of us hadn't been trained in such departments. They are told that "today the trend goes clearly toward modularity [...] as seen in models from Vienna, Germersheim and Hildesheim presented at the workshop" (433). Here lies the danger. There are about 200 university-level translator-training programs in the world. Most of them, east and west, have some kind of active connection with Modern Language departments. If there

is widespread modularity, it is more likely to be found in a plethora of short-term highly specialized translation programs rather than three full-fledged independent Germanic institutes, just as our most active research fields are now more likely to deal with small highly focused areas rather than large institutional doctrines. The presentation of this workshop, like the editing of the volume as a whole, seeks to sideline much of the real diversity that exists in translation studies. Phrases like “there is general agreement” (432) or “it is agreed that” (433) fail to tell us exactly who is doing the agreeing, why, and for whom. They surreptitiously enable theoretical and institutional differences to be plastered over, resulting in an apparently coherent and eminently exportable body of knowledge.

Such orientation is no doubt better than none. Yet this volume’s saving graces might eventually spring from the cracks that show through. *Caveat emptor*.

Anthony Pym (Tarragona)