

国外翻译研究丛书之二十六

# THE TRANSLATOR'S INVISIBILITY

*A History of Translation*

## 译者的隐身 ——一部翻译史

LAWRENCE VENUTI



外教社

上海外语教育出版社

SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS

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## 借鉴和创造 (代序)

上海外语教育出版社自成立以来一直是我国外语教育最优秀的后勤部和侦调部。因为它不但为我国各个层次(尤其本科与研究生层次)的外语教育提供了多种高水平的教材、教参和工具书,而且还出版了多学科、多语种和多系列的中文版和外文版的学术著作,比如“现代语言学丛书”、“牛津应用语言学丛书”、“美国文学史论译丛”、“外国文学史丛书”、“剑桥文学指南丛书”、“当代英语语言学丛书”以及列入国家及教育部规划的人文社科重点项目的外国语言文学、文化等方面的图书等。为了适应我国现代化建设和教育改革的需要,还出版了一批国际金融、对外贸易、涉外保险、国际经济法、国际新闻和管理科学等方面的教材与专著。这些著作在外语的学科建设与学术研究以及复合型人才培养等方面都在发挥着强有力的侦察、调研和指导作用。这是外语界有口皆碑的。

随着中外文化交流的纵深发展以及我国现代化建设对人才的需求,对比语言学和翻译学近年来在我国有了较快的发展,最突出的证据就是①外语类硕士博士点上研究对比与翻译方向的学生在逐年迅速增多,而且我们的高校已经有了翻译学院和翻译系(当然还太少)。②外语专业的学生考中文、法律等其他人文社科专业的硕士、博士以及反方向的走向已经起步。这种跨学科的人才已成为人才资源竞争的最主要对象,因此发展趋势定会看好。上海外语教育出版社为适应这种高层次人才培养和

新学科建设的需要,不但积极出版国内关于对比研究和翻译研究的专著和论文集,最近又推出了原版“国外翻译研究丛书”,这套丛书时间跨度从古代到现代,所选书目皆为译学发展史上有里程碑作用的名家名著,堪称译学经典。他们计划分批出版,以满足读者的需求。

这套丛书的出版首先可以解决国内翻译教学原版参考书多年匮乏的困难,真可以说是我国翻译教学与理论研究的及时雨。我想学习和关心这个学科的师生和其他人士定会对这套书的引进为之欢呼,为之祝贺。

这套丛书的价值还在于能大大促进我国翻译学科建设的发  
展。译学学科的发展依赖于研究者在三个方面的深入研究和结合。一是对本国译学的继承性研究;二是对外国译学的借鉴性研究;三是对翻译实践和翻译教学中新问题的探索性研究。只有这三者研究深入并结合好了,才可能从经验与技巧逐步升华为具有科学性的译学理论。这三个方面的研究,改革开放以来,在我国已取得了很显著的成就,这是有目共睹的。翻译学在我国已于20世纪80年代末有了独立学科的初级形态,90年代又有了新的发展,对学科的独立性以及理论体系的结构与功能有了更多的探讨。依照学科建设和规律和研究现状,我们尚需在上述三个方面加大研究力度,而这套丛书就是借鉴性研究的主要资源。从这个角度讲,这套丛书的引进也是我国文化基本建设的重要工程之一。

在新的世纪,文化(包括各类科学技术)会多方面快速深入人类的日常生活,各国之间的交流会空前深广,因此翻译的功能会逐步扩大,实用性翻译人才的需求量定会空前增加。这就要求我们除了做好高层次研究型人才的培养以外,还应十分重视实用性人才的培养和应用译学的研究。我想出版社一定会关注和引导译学建设的理论研究与应用的发展趋势。

杨自俭  
青岛海洋大学六三居室  
2001年3月28日

## 出版前言

本书是美籍意大利学者劳伦斯·韦努蒂(Lawrence Venuti)的一本代表作。劳伦斯·韦努蒂是美国解构主义翻译思想的积极倡导者,因此本书也是研究解构主义翻译思想的经典著作。

全书共分七章。在第一章,作者开宗明义地表明翻译作品的“不可见性”(invisibility)就是在译文中看不见译者的痕迹。他指出,这种使译文“透明”的幻想,就是要求译者努力保证译文的通顺易懂——考察一下报刊杂志的评论,人们不难看到这种“通顺”的翻译策略在英语翻译中产生的广泛深刻的影响。在第二章,作者追溯了英美文化中归化翻译的历史,认为它始于17世纪的英国,并且从德南姆(Sir J. Denham)到德莱顿,到泰特勒,人人都倡导并实践了这种旨在尊重和满足的语读者需要,而对源语文本进行归化处理的通顺的翻译策略。从此,通顺的翻译就成了翻译的标准。第三章中,作者回顾了19世纪初异化翻译在德国兴起的历史。1813年,施莱尔马赫(Friedrich Schleiermacher)在一篇关于翻译的不同方法的演讲中指出:“有两种翻译方法:译者要么尽可能不去打扰作者,而让读者向作者靠拢;要么尽可能不去打扰读者,而让作者向读者靠拢。”施莱尔马赫本人是支持异化的翻译方法的。这一演讲可以看作是异化翻译兴起的标志。作者进一步阐述了异化翻译对德国以及英美文化的影响,指出持异化观点的主要是英国翻译家弗朗西斯·纽曼(Francis Newman, 1805-1897)和威廉·莫里斯(William Morris, 1834-1896)。而阿诺德(Matthew Arnold)与纽曼之

争,在作者看来,也只能表明异化翻译在当时的英美文化中仍处于边缘地位。第四章中,作者主要介绍了意大利著名作家兼翻译家塔尔凯蒂(I. U. Tarchetti, 1839 - 1869)、他的作品以及他对翻译研究做出的贡献。塔尔凯蒂为翻译领域带来一股新风,他翻译并改写了雪莱的两部哥特派小说,引进了不同于本国现实主义文学传统的异化的写作题材,从而促使意大利文学在一定范围内的转型。第五章中,作者指出,20世纪初现代主义在英美文化中兴起,它向英语翻译所提倡的“透明”的主张发出了挑战。然而,作者又指出,相对于“通顺”的翻译策略,由现代主义派倡导的异化的翻译策略在整个英美文化中仍地位低下,无足轻重。第六章中,作者以当代意大利诗人德安吉利斯(Milo De Angelis)的创作和自己翻译其作品的亲身实践和感受为例,说明由于德安吉利斯的诗歌偏离当代英美诗歌的创作规范,因此在翻译中,宜采用抵抗式的翻译策略以重现其诗歌的特点。在最后一章,作者提出译者应当采取抵抗的翻译策略,这样既有助于保留源文的异国情调,也挑战了翻译作品在文学作品中的二流地位,并藉此可以改变译者的隐身状态,提高译者的身份,使其最终能与源文作者享有同等的权威。作者在结束全文讨论后指出:翻译思想的彻底转变,尚有待于翻译阅读、翻译评论和翻译教学等各个方面的转变。

本书从独特的解构主义视角出发,深入探讨了解构主义与翻译研究之间的相互联系和相互影响,观点新颖、论述详尽、内容翔实,对翻译研究人员,英语专业研究生、本科生,英语翻译爱好者以及对西方文艺批评、解构主义文学理论等学科感兴趣的读者而言,不啻为一部上乘之作。

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# The Translator's Invisibility

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*The Translator's Invisibility* provides a thorough and critical examination of translation from the seventeenth century to the present day. It shows how fluency prevailed over other translation strategies to shape the canon of foreign literatures in English, and it interrogates the ethnocentric and imperialist cultural consequences of the domestic values that were simultaneously inscribed and masked in foreign texts during this period.

In tracing the history of translation, Lawrence Venuti locates alternative translation theories and practices which make it possible to counter the strategy of fluency, aiming to communicate linguistic and cultural differences instead of removing them. Using texts and translations from Britain, America and Europe he elaborates the theoretical and critical means by which translation can be studied and practiced as a locus of difference, recovering and revising forgotten translations to establish an alternative tradition.

**Lawrence Venuti** is Professor of English at Temple University, Philadelphia, and has been a professional translator for the past fifteen years. He is the editor of *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*.



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## General editors' preface

---

The growth of translation studies as a separate discipline is a success story of the 1980s. The subject has developed in many parts of the world and is clearly destined to continue developing well into the twenty-first century. Translation studies brings together work in a wide variety of fields, including linguistics, literary study, history, anthropology, psychology, and economics. This series of books will reflect the breadth of work in translation studies and will enable readers to share in the exciting new developments that are taking place at the present time.

Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices, and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us toward a greater awareness of the world in which we live.

Since this series of books on translation studies is the first of its kind, it will be concerned with its own genealogy. It will publish texts from the past that illustrate its concerns in the present, and will publish texts of a more theoretical nature immediately addressing those concerns, along with case studies illustrating manipulation through rewriting in various literatures. It will be comparative in nature and will range through many literary traditions, both

Western and non-Western. Through the concepts of rewriting and manipulation, this series aims to tackle the problem of ideology, change and power in literature and society and so assert the central function of translation as a shaping force.

Susan Bassnett  
André Lefevere

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## Preface and acknowledgements

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*The Translator's Invisibility* originates in my own work as a professional translator since the late 1970s. But any autobiographical elements are subsumed in what is effectively a history of English-language translation from the seventeenth century to the present. My project is to trace the origins of the situation in which every English-language translator works today, although from an opposing standpoint, with the explicit aim of locating alternatives, of changing that situation. The historical narratives presented here span centuries and national literatures, but even though based on detailed research, they are necessarily selective in articulating key moments and controversies, and frankly polemical in studying the past to question the marginal position of translation in contemporary Anglo-American culture. I imagine a diverse audience for the book, including translation theorists, literary theorists and critics, period specialists in various literatures (English-language and foreign), and reviewers of translations for periodicals, publishers, private foundations, and government endowments. Most of all, I wish to speak to translators and readers of translations, both professional and nonprofessional, focusing their attention on the ways that translations are written and read and urging them to think of new ones.

A project with this sort of intention and scope will inevitably come to rely on the help of many people in different fields of literary and critical expertise. Assembling the list of those who over the past several years read, discussed, criticized, or otherwise encouraged my work is a special pleasure, making me realize, once again, how fortunate I was: Antoine Berman, Charles Bernstein, Shelly Brivic, Ann Caesar, Steve Cole, Tim Corrigan, Pellegrino D'Acerno, Guy Davenport, Deirdre David, Milo De Angelis,

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The graphs displaying patterns in translation publishing (Figures 1 and 2) were prepared by Chris Behnam of Key Computer Services, New York City.

All unattributed translations in the following pages are mine.

Come la sposa di ogni uomo non si sottrae a una teoria del tradurre (Milo De Angelis), I am reduced to an inadequate expression of my gratitude to Lindsay Davies, who has taught me much about English, and much about the foreign in translation.

L.V.  
New York City  
January 1994

## Contents

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| The Translator's Invisibility ..... | i   |
| General Editor's Preface .....      | iii |
| Preface and Acknowledgements .....  | v   |
| <br>                                |     |
| Chapter 1 Invisibility .....        | 1   |
| Chapter 2 Canon .....               | 43  |
| Chapter 3 Nation .....              | 99  |
| Chapter 4 Dissidence .....          | 148 |
| Chapter 5 Margin .....              | 187 |
| Chapter 6 Simpatico .....           | 273 |
| Chapter 7 Call to Action .....      | 307 |
| <br>                                |     |
| Notes .....                         | 314 |
| Bibliography .....                  | 324 |
| Index .....                         | 345 |

## Chapter 1

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# Invisibility

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I see translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections – scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself.

Norman Shapiro

### I

"Invisibility" is the term I will use to describe the translator's situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture. It refers to two mutually determining phenomena: one is an illusionistic effect of discourse, of the translator's own manipulation of English; the other is the practice of reading and evaluating translations that has long prevailed in the United Kingdom and the United States, among other cultures, both English and foreign-language. A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the "original." The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning. What is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator's crucial



intervention in the foreign text. The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text.

The dominance of fluency in English-language translation becomes apparent in a sampling of reviews from newspapers and periodicals. On those rare occasions when reviewers address the translation at all, their brief comments usually focus on its style, neglecting such other possible questions as its accuracy, its intended audience, its economic value in the current book market, its relation to literary trends in English, its place in the translator's career. And over the past fifty years the comments are amazingly consistent in praising fluent discourse while damning deviations from it, even when the most diverse range of foreign texts is considered.

Take fiction, for instance, the most translated genre worldwide. Limit the choices to European and Latin American writers, the most translated into English, and pick examples with different kinds of narratives – novels and short stories, realistic and fantastic, lyrical and philosophical, psychological and political. Here is one possible list: Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1946), Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse* (1955), Heinrich Böll's *Absent Without Leave* (1965), Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics* (1968), Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970), Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1980), Mario Vargas Llosa's *In Praise of the Stepmother* (1990), Julia Kristeva's *The Samurai* (1991), Gianni Celati's *Appearances* (1992), Adolfo Bioy Casares's *A Russian Doll* (1992). Some of these translations enjoyed considerable critical and commercial success in English; others made an initial splash, then sank into oblivion; still others passed with little or no notice. Yet in the reviews they were all judged by the same criterion – fluency. The following selection of excerpts comes from various British and American periodicals, both literary and mass-audience; some were written by noted critics, novelists, and reviewers:

Stuart Gilbert's translation seems an absolutely splendid job. It is not easy, in translating French, to render qualities of sharpness or vividness, but the prose of Mr. Gilbert is always natural, brilliant, and crisp.

(Wilson 1946:100)

The style is elegant, the prose lovely, and the translation excellent.

(*New Republic* 1955:46)