

***Retraductions de la Renaissance au XXIe siècle.* Edited by Christine Lombez.**

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Retranslations give rise to many questions, all of them explored in this book. Why, for whom, when, how, by whom, and in what languages are they made? What kind of relationship, if any, has the translator with his or her predecessors? Some texts are retranslated many times, like ‘comets’ tails’, others only once, or only in some languages. Some texts are canonized, giving rise to a resistance to retranslation. Jörn Albrecht’s introductory article fans out possibilities, situating retranslation (a new version in the same language) in relation to *Rückübersetzung* (putting something back into the original language using a translation as a base) as well as ‘Übersetzung aus zweiter Hand’ (or translation from an intermediary version). What follows is a rich collection of essays that treats reception of texts with great chronological depth, geographical breadth and variety of approaches.

What are the motives for retranslation? One is a dissatisfaction with existing translations, sometimes because languages change over time and because, as Nicolas Waquet observes, (re)translations are not obsolete or silent but evolve according to mutations in all languages. Sometimes there are commercial reasons. Jean-Louis Backès describes how he was commissioned to translate Gogol for a school edition, adding that legal considerations also come into play, with publishers asking translators to ‘dust off’ older out-of-copyright translations. Yves Chevrel notes how the end of copyright on Kafka triggered a whole spate of new retranslations. Indeed, Albrecht argues that there is a strong correlation between the literary value or commercial success of a text and the number of translations it spawns.

Different practices of retranslation exist at different times. Patrizia de Capitani points out in her study of the ‘long history of French misunderstanding’ of Boiardo’s *Roland Amoureux* that the Renaissance approach was an ‘erasure’ of the formal, cultural or ideological otherness of the text to be translated, very far from the twentieth-century concern with the specifics of the original. Frédéric Weinmann notes how Nerval ‘tidies up’ Bürger’s *Lenore*, adopting a Romantic practice of ‘plagiarizing’ or merging of multiple versions, the original just being one of these. It is interesting to note that the topic of *self* retranslation recurs at several periods, not

just in the case of Nerval but also in Vialatte's self retranslation of Kafka, and Tagore's two versions of the *Gîtânjali*.

Some essays connect to more theoretical issues in translation studies. Anne Teulade refers to the multiple versions of *Don Quichotte* as a 'palette' of texts providing two paths to follow: one theoretical, the other relating to the specifics of translating Cervantes. Aude Ameille examines the prosodic constraints of opera retranslating faced by W.H. Auden and Kallman where the new libretto had to be rhythmically identical to the music, the watchword being 'prima la musica, dopo le parole'. Gerhardt Stenger chooses two extremes of translator role both in Biblical texts (where the translator is an ancillary figure involved in the mirage of full communication of the sacred word) and in obscene texts by Aristophanes and Martial (with translators intervening in the non-transmission of the text). Yves Chevrel studies retranslations of Kafka in different languages, French, English and Spanish. Finally, Philippe Postel argues that retranslations can happen because the tools available have changed. Two French translators of the Chinese novel *Yujiaoli* (Two Cousins) essentially followed the same scientific method of translating but it was new grammars, dictionaries and philology that made the second translation necessary.

Other essays link to critical factors in cultural transmission generally. For instance, when the idea of preserving a heritage or a tradition is paramount, people do not wish to know that they are dealing with a remake or a new version. Julien Gœury shows how French Protestant retranslators of the psalms mined away, modernizing inside the psalms while keeping up a façade that they were presenting the same version as the Reformation psalter. Christine Lombez notes that in nineteenth-century France there were two big waves of translation from modern Greek, corresponding to support for Greek nationalism, and when the second wave peaked philhellenism moved to Germany where there was another wave. Personal contacts were also important between the French translators and Greek intellectuals, since it was from the French translations that the Greeks discovered the popular lyric tradition of their compatriots.

Retranslation was also a matter of bringing it all back home in the case of Rabindranath Tagore. Claudine Le Blanc highlights the existence of two Tagores in

translation, the first kind of translating being a ‘carrying over’ of Tagore into the west, in which Tagore was complicit, and where he came to embody different things depending on whether the mediators were Harald Hjärne, the chair of the Nobel prize committee, W.B. Yeats, André Gide or Saint-John Perse. The second kind of translating is a re-translating in the strict sense of bringing Tagore back to Bengal and to Bengali.

This book emerges from an interest in retranslation that has been underway in France for the past few years and as such is a valuable contribution to the debates about the social, historical and cultural conditions of how multiple translations are produced and received. Refreshingly, two thirds of the book concern translations done before the twentieth century and its focus is not only on European texts. More importantly, its interest does not simply lie in the field of translation since its breadth of approach means that it would also appeal to readers concerned with patterns of cultural contact and transmission.

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