

Zsuzsa Csikai, Adrienn Gulyás and Judit Mudriczki

Retranslation Practices in Europe through the Centuries

2/2024

DOI: 10.70596/cts185

Herausgegeben am / Éditée au
/ Edited at: Institute of Applied
Linguistics and Translatology
(IALT), Leipzig University
ISSN: 2617-3441

Zum Zitieren des Artikels / Pour citer l'article / To cite the article:

Csikai, Zsuzsa; Gulyás, Adrienn & Mudriczki, Judit (2025): Retranslation Practices in Europe through the Centuries, *Chronotopos* 6 (2), 5–8. DOI: 10.70596/cts185



Zsuzsa Csikai, Adrienn Gulyás, Judit Mudriczki

Introduction: Retranslation Practices in Europe through the Centuries

Retranslation Studies emerged as a distinct field of research within Translation Studies in the past three decades. A focused academic discussion of the retranslation of literary works started in 1990 when Bensimon and Berman edited a special issue of *Palimpsestes* on ‘Retraduire.’ Since then, retranslation as a cultural practice has steadily attracted attention, the notion as an entry was added in widely-used handbooks like the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* or the *Handbook of Translation Studies*, and it has also become a stimulating topic of monographs (DEANE-COX 2014), edited collections (CADERA & WALSH 2017, BERK ALBACHTEN & GÜRÇAĞLAR 2019) and thematic issues of such academic journals as *Target* (2015) or *The Translator* (2020). Even if it has reasonably received severe criticism for prompting invalid and heuristic methods of research and argumentation, the “retranslation hypothesis” by Chesterman (2000) has also fueled academic discourses on the dynamics of retranslation over the centuries (PETERS & VAN POUCKE 2023). Since 2013, an international conference series called “Retranslation in Context” has offered both formal and informal occasions for scholars to meet and exchange their ideas on the topic. The series started at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, and further events were organized at Ghent University (2017), Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid (2019), Károli Gáspár University, Budapest (2022) and most recently at Ege University, Izmir (2024).

The present issue of *Chronotopos* intends to expand discussions on retranslation with a historical European perspective drawing on both textual and contextual analysis. After a theoretical proposal about a new and innovative conceptualization of retranslation, the first two articles address the translation history of English classics in Central Europe with case studies from Hungary and Poland, while the last two offer insights into retranslation practices of Russian literary works into Dutch.

In the lead article “Retranslation as Re-accentuation,” Kris Peeters addresses a theoretical concern when he argues that Bakhtin’s idea¹ of “re-accentuation” can be a productive way of conceptualizing retranslation because it is void of the methodological pitfalls of the more privileged “retranslation hypothesis.” Re-accentuations, in the Bakhtinian sense, mean a diachronic series of dialogical re-interpretations, against diverse linguistic and socio-ideological backgrounds, of the source material translated.

¹ In the current journal issue, instead of using Cyrillic characters, all Russian names will be transliterated according to Library of Congress system (ALA-LC), but without the diacritical marks above the letters.

Peeters claims that retranslations, then, can be considered as re-accentuations to the second degree: retranslators re-accent the source material, yet by doing so they also re-accent earlier translations already present in the target context that had previously re-accented the same material in a certain way. To illustrate his argument, the author cites a selection of illustrative examples from translations and retranslations in several languages (Dutch, French, English, Italian etc.), of literary prose by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, Gustave Flaubert, James Joyce or Flann O'Brien.

The first case study on Central European translation practices, "Playboy, Hero, Champion: Retranslations of J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* in Hungary" by Zsuzsa Csikai focuses on drama translation and takes a keen interest in the Hungarian translation of the idiosyncratic Irish English dialect, the use of which shows resistance to British cultural domination in the play. The author argues that following the first translation of the play by Tamás Ungvári in 1960, its 21st century retranslations commissioned by various stage directors answered the challenges of dialect translation in different ways, yet all three retranslations eventually strengthened the canonical status of the play in Hungary.

The author of the second Central European case study, Izabela Szymańska, examines a recent Polish retranslation of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* (2018) against the background of its earlier Polish renditions in the paper entitled "Style and Status in Retranslating Children's Classics: on the history of Polish Translations of Kipling's *Just So Stories*." Following an overview of the history of Polish translations of the book and their publications, the author examines the re-translator's approach in terms of tendencies that can be observed on the Polish market of children's books as regards retranslations of canonical titles. The case study sheds light on the changing approach to the translation of Kipling's style (distinctly poetic, emulating oral tradition) as well as to the decision to preserve the original illustrations as integral part of the book. While translations in the 20th century tended to neutralize Kipling's style and disregard features that did not conform to Polish literary conventions, e.g. alliteration, the most recent translation intends to provide readers with a creative and innovative rendering in Polish of the unconventional use of language in the source text. These changes in approach are interpreted in connection with historical changes in the hierarchy of functions ascribed to children's literature in the Polish context marking a shift in focus from educational and pedagogical functions of children's literature to entertaining and imagination-stimulating functions. At the same time, the author also calls attention to the emergence of erudite retranslations featuring explanatory paratexts, which is a reflection of the growth of the status of the original as a canonical text.

The second part of the journal issue focusing on the translation of Russian canonical authors in Western Europe starts with Gaëtan Regniers' article "From Text to Tree: a Stemmatological Approach to Retranslation" in which the author proposes a new methodology to assess retranslations of serialized fiction in nineteenth and twentieth century newspapers. His study focuses on a corpus of translated Russian literature published in Dutch newspapers between 1835 and 1990 and compares the available Dutch versions of Leo Tolstoy's short story "Bog pravdu vidit, da ne skoro skazhet"

(“God Sees the Truth but Waits”). The aim of his exploration is to better understand retranslation in periodicals by first identifying and mapping the phenomenon, then examining the motivations for newspapers to reissue the same translated story. The author applies stemmatology, also known as Lachmannian text analysis, a genealogical method that was originally designed to classify and reconstruct manuscripts, but he argues that this model can be instrumental to distinguish different copies based on minor differences. He proposes a typology based on the different varieties of reprinting as they emerge in periodicals. This model distinguishes between reprinting, re-editing, revising, and rewriting and favors a sociological approach: it reflects the perspective of actors assuming that interventions were made to cater the text to the needs of the readers. He argues that his approach, which combines text-genetic techniques and a refined retranslation typology, serves as a useful method in analysing the phenomenon of retranslation published in periodicals.

In the last article “Canonization and Renaming: the Rationale behind Retranslating Russian Book Titles in Dutch,” Piet Van Poucke investigates the reasons for keeping or modifying titles of first translations in literary translations from Russian into Dutch. A corpus of Dutch titles of translated and retranslated Russian works between 1789 and 2020 is explored to trace where retranslators changed the title in comparison with the previous translation. Title translation proves to be a fascinating field of research because it is a target culture oriented activity of hybrid authorship that implies the application of non-literal translation strategies by not only translators but also editors and publishers who often intend to manipulate readers for both ideological and commercial purposes. While studying the Dutch translation of titles by canonical authors like M. Bulgakov, A. Chekhov, F. Dostoevskii, N. Gogol, I. Goncharov, N. Leskov, B. Pasternak, A. Pushkin, M. Saltykov, L. N. Tolstoi or I. Turgenev, the author finds that most works in his database show various types of title adaptation, and the most common retranslation strategy is that of foreignisation, which intends to find a more literal Dutch counterpart to titles than previous translations with clearly seductive functions to attract readership.

The book reviews section adds further insights into retranslation practices in Europe from three different angles. First, the volume *Perspectives on Retranslation* offers a wide scale overview of academic discourses on retranslation studies as it shares a selection from the papers presented at the first two conferences of the “Retranslation in Context” series organized at Boğaziçi University in 2013 and 2015. Second, the Hungarian volume *Klasszikus művek újrafordítása* manifests the diversity of both academic approaches and retranslation practices in Central Europe, and its review in English provides even non-Hungarian scholars with the opportunity to see current academic and professional trends in the region. Third, the most recent retranslation of the old English poem *Beowulf* by Maria Dahvana Headley is reviewed to showcase professional concerns from the retranslator’s point of view.

References

- BENSIMON, Paul (1990) : “Présentation”, *Palimpsestes* 4, ix-xiii.
- BERK ALBACHTEN, Özlem & TAHIR GÜRÇAĞLAR, Şehnaz (eds.) (2018): *Perspectives on Retranslation: Ideology, Paratexts, Methods*. New York/London: Routledge.
- BERMAN, Antoine (1990): “La Retraduction comme espace de traduction”, *Palimpsestes* 4, 1-7.
- BROWNLIE, Siobhan (2006): “Narrative theory and retranslation theory”, *Across Languages and Cultures* 7 (2), 145-170.
- CADERA, Susanne M. & WALSH, Andrew S. (eds.) (2017): *Literary Retranslation in Context*. Oxford/Berlin: Peter Lang.
- CHESTERMAN, Andrew (2000): “A causal model for translation studies.” In: OLOHAN, M. (ed.): *Intercultural faultlines: Research models in translation studies I: Textual and cognitive aspects*. Manchester: St. Jerome, 15-28.
- DEANE-COX, Sharon (2014): *Retranslation. Translation, Literature and Reinterpretation*. London/New Delhi/New York/Sydney: Bloomsbury.
- TAHIR GÜRÇAĞLAR, Şehnaz (2009): “Retranslation.” In: BAKER, M. & SALDANHA, G. (eds.): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. Second edition. London/New York: Routledge, 233-236.
- PEETERS, Kris & VAN POUCKE, Piet (2023): “Retranslation, thirty-odd years after Berman”, *Parallèles* 35(1), 3-27.