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Review

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In *Fictional Translators: Rethinking Translation through Literature*, Rosemary Arrojo provides us with new insights for probing into translation studies through reflections on fictional texts. She believes fictional narratives have implications for translation-related problems or theories on the condition that we expand the definition of theory to its “etymology of *theoria*, a way of seeing or looking” (Arrojo, 2018: 3). The book comes out of Arrojo’s long-held conviction that “fictional representations of the work of translators will shine a special, often unexpected light on the scene of translation as an asymmetrical encounter between different languages, interests, and perspectives” (Arrojo, 2018:1). Through this book, the author reinvestigates the clichés permeating the translation studies, rediscovering what has been undervalued or even ignored.

The book is generated in recognition of the post-Nietzschean thought featuring “approaches associated with deconstruction, poststructuralism, gender, and postcolonial studies” (Arrojo, 2018:1). It highlights the agency of the translators and interpreters and explores issues such as power relations, gender, instability of meanings, the authorial position, and so forth, as demonstrated in the fictional narratives and their implications for the translation-related problems or theories. Arrojo is inspired by the “fictional turn” to associate fiction for the exploration of translation.

According to Ma (2018: 188), “Fictional turn in translation studies emerged with the poststructuralist dissolution of generic boundaries that has characterized literary theory and cultural studies and its redefinition of theory.” The concept of fictional turn was first mentioned by Else Viera, who defined

it as the move in the discipline [translation studies] that signalled “the incorporation of fictional-theoretical parameters as a source of theorization on translation and other hermeneutical processes” (Vieria, 1995: 51). Adriana proposed that the “fictional turn” in translation studies features “a twofold movement” (Adriana, 2002: 81): the first movement being “fictionalization of translation” through the use of translation as a theme for fictional works while the second being the employment of “fiction as a source of translation theorization”, based on which the present book comes out. Jorge Luis Borges, Rosemary Arrojo, Adriana S. Pagano, and Edwin Gentzler are all advocates in this respect to challenge the essentialist notions in translation studies.

The book comprises eight chapters for the analysis of seven fictional texts. Out of all the texts, it deserves notice, as what Arrojo acknowledges, that her scholarship is mostly influenced by Borges and his text “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote”.

In chapter One, titled ‘Introducing theory through fiction’, Arrojo explores through two fictional texts the inevitable visibility of the translator and the impossibility for the reproduction of same meanings of the source text in translation. In other words, there exist no stable meanings in the original text to be faithful to in the process of translation or interpretation. In her first analysed fiction written by Borges, the protagonist Pierre Menard tried so hard to reproduce the same *Quixote* as what depicted by its original author Cervantes that Menard was absolutely faithful to the original text “word for word and line for line” (Arrojo, 2018: 19). Pierre Menard even learned the original language, returned to the religion of Catholicism, and tried to forget the history that separated him from the original text. However, his attempt ended up in vain. This is proved by a third-person narrative in the fiction that the *Quixote* reproduced by Pierre Menard is quite different from Cervantes’. Arrojo tried to signify through this fiction that it is impossible for the translator to reconstruct the sameness of the original text in a completely different context or culture. The historical context where the translators live limits their translation, making it impossible for the translator either to be invisible or neutral. Likewise, the second fiction explored by Arrojo in this chapter named “Letter to a Young Lady in Paris” “composes a more thorough portrait of the translator’s often repressed or veiled agency” (Arrojo, 2018: 24). In the fiction, despite the [tenant] translator protagonist’s attempt to keep the [landlord] lady’s apartment intact during the four months of lease when she was away in Paris, he found it impossible to do so. In the end, the translator decided to give up his life by committing suicide out of guilt. Figuratively speaking, the inhabitants of the

translator in the apartment, in the views of Arrojo, represents the translator's temporary occupation of a textual space [of the original], where the translator is considered as an intruder. The fictional scene depicting the irrepressible vomit of rabbits coming out of the translator's throat and mouth can be understood as either "the translator's own humanity", "the translator's subterranean voice" or his "creative writing" (Arrojo, 2018: 27). In other words, it represents the inevitable agency or visibility of the translator. The self-accusation which led to the suicide of the translator in the end symbolizes the privileges of the author over the translator, as what the long-held clichés in translation studies uphold.

Chapter Two is entitled 'Fiction as theory and activism'. The fictional work of Rodolfo Walsh's "Footnote" is used for analysis by Arrojo. Similar to the implications of the "Letter to a Young Lady in Paris" in chapter 1, this fictional narrative also implies the inevitably repressed agency of the translator, who ended up committing suicide as well. Taking the editor Otero as the representative of a publishing house, for which the protagonist translator Léon works, Arrojo reveals through the fiction the power relations involved in translation practice. For example, translators do not have any agency. Instead, they have to follow the rules and regulations stipulated by the publishing house. Moreover, translators are treated like manual "laborers" (Arrojo, 2018: 39), who are poorly paid, barely able to make a living. Additionally, the split narratives in "Footnote" features Otero's narration of Léon as the main text and the translator protagonist's suicide letter as footnote at the bottom, which takes up more and more space on each page until it finally replaces the main text in the fiction. Arrojo sees such a layout of the fictional text as a representation of the dichotomies between the translator and the publishing house, signifying the hierarchy involved on one hand, the visibility of the translator and Walsh [the author]'s stand in favour of the translator's agency on the other.

In Chapter Three 'The translation of philosophy into fiction', Arrojo uses Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Oval Portrait" for translational theorization. The implications of these two fictional narratives subvert the traditional notions in translation studies. First, Arrojo reveals the dichotomies and conflicts between the original text and the translation. Through likening translation as painting and the original text as the models of painters, the death of models in the fictional plots figuratively signifies the incompatibility between the original and the representations [translations]. Moreover, the death of the protagonists in the fictions implied

the instability of the original meaning in translation, an implication quite different from the essentialist view that the original text is everlasting and stable. The death of the protagonists and the immortality of painting [translation], metaphorically put translation beyond the original, subverting the traditional concept of the original text's superiority over translation. In short, Arrojo uses the two fictional texts to challenge the traditional views concerning the hierarchical relations between the original and the reproductions [translations] as well as the stability of the original.

In chapter Four, 'The translation of philosophy into fiction', Arrojo analyses Borges's "Funes, His Memory" and revisits his fiction "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote". It can be seen that Borges is greatly influenced by the philosophy of Nietzsche and his work echoes that of Nietzsche in respect of language and translation. For example, the concept that there is no original leaf proposed by Nietzsche implies the nonexistence of the original text to be faithful to during translation, as what Borges advocates. Additionally, Borges holds that "the concept of the definitive text corresponds only to religion or exhaustion" (Arrojo, 2018: 68), implying the instability of most original texts and the "inevitability of change and its consequences" (Arrojo, 2018: 68) in translation. The main figure Funes' death in Borges's fictional plots due to his inability for forgetting is a metaphorical symbolization of the possible consequence in translation as a result of non-transformation. Additionally, Borges deems that "they [translations] could be potentially richer than originals" (Arrojo, 2018: 85), which indirectly reveals Nietzsche's concept of the "authorial way to power" of the translator.

In Chapter Five entitled 'Texts as private retreats', three fictional texts are used for analysis. They are respectively Kafka's "The Burrow," Borges "Death and the Compass" and Kosztolányi's "Gallus". Through the exploration of these three fictional plots, Arrojo reveals the implications of the power struggles involved in translation. The animal in Kafka's fiction is a metaphorical representation of the creator/author of the original text in translation. Its attempt to protect the burrow from any invaders [translators] signifies the author's hope for the "exclusive possession of eternal truth and stability" (Arrojo, 2018: 97). However, such hope, according to Arrojo's interpretation, is all but an illusion. It is impossible for the author to have total control over the original text. In spite of this, the animal's alertness over the outside intruders demonstrates the creator/author's will to power and the protection of its property [the original text]. Unlike the implicit conflicts suggested between the author and translator in Kafka's fiction, Arrojo elaborates on the

explicit power struggle involved in translation through the analysis of Borges' fictional plots. In the fiction, while Erik Lönnrot, the [reader]detective, tried to arrest Red Scharlach the [author] murderer, the former ended up getting caught by the carefully designed textual labyrinth of the latter. Therefore, this fictional narrative figuratively demonstrates the translator [reader of the source text]'s failed "will to power" in his struggle with the author, echoing the essentialist viewpoints of the translator's inferiority to the original author. By the same token, "Gullus" reveals the translator's unsuccessful attempt to the "authorial will to power" as well. Although the protagonist translator has exceptional language skills, his so-called disease of a compulsion to steal leads to the refusal of his translations by the editor. Metaphorically speaking, the fictional plots suggest the differences generated in the process of translation is considered as theft, no matter how refined the translation is. Moreover, the fiction implies that the translator's "authorial will to power" should be repressed. Otherwise, the translator will get punished. All these viewpoints echo the traditional clichés in translation studies.

In chapter Six 'Authorship as the affirmation of masculinity', Arrojo discusses the long-held gender-based concept concerning the dichotomy associating authorship with creativity and masculinity and translation/proofreading, with femininity. In the fiction "The History of the Siege of Lison", it is when the translator protagonist Raimundo decides to exert his authorial will to power, illustrating the "reawakening of his masculinity" (Arrojo, 2018: 10)" that the proof-reader Maria Sara is intrigued. In other words, Maria's interest in him is closely related to his change of identity from a translator to a writer, which echoes the traditional viewpoints of seeing writers as being the creative masculine. Likewise, in the fiction "Guy de Maupassant", Arrojo associates creative writing with gender for exploration. After the young ambitious narrator/translator exerts his authorial will to power and rewrites the stories of Maupassant, the favourite writer of a female named Raisa, he becomes a seducer for the woman. Figuratively speaking, it is only when the talented translator who temporarily takes the place of the author [Maupassant] associated with masculinity that the woman is seduced. Furthermore, while the narrator who eventually becomes the metaphorically represented author with "fine writing" (Arrojo, 2018: 122), the seduced woman Reisa is figuratively representing the ignorant females, which echoes the essentialist viewpoints regarding the superiority of men over women.

Chapter Seven 'The gendering of texts' is also in respect to the exploration of gender-based relationships among the author, translator, and reader. Although

the fictional plot echoes some of the essentialist views regarding the hierarchy between men and women, it accentuates the translators' authorial way to power and their visibility, which is kind of post-Nietzschean thought. In the fiction of Scliar's "Footnotes", it is through the translator's footnotes and interpretation that the original author is introduced to readers, which highlights the invisible and weak author and the empowered translator. Moreover, in the fiction, the author's mistress N.'s leaving the author to marry the male translator positions herself as the *belle infidèle* [beautiful unfaithful], as what the traditional clichés define women. As a previous mistress of the original author, N.'s marrying to the translator also signifies "the difficulty for separating what belongs to the author and what belongs to the translator" (Arrojo, 2018: 11). Likewise, in the fiction "If on a Winter's Night a Traveller", there is an impotent author yet a powerful reader, whose masculine attribute enables him to win the love of another female reader Ludmilla in his competition with other pursuers: the author and the translator, signifying the power of the reader. In short, Arrojo interprets the fictional texts in a way symbolizing the "death" of the author and the empowered masculine translator or reader, which subverts the traditional notion of the author's superiority to the translator or reader. However, the women in the texts are delineated as the "inspiring Muse and object of desire" (Arrojo, 2018: 138), which belongs to the essentialist views.

In Chapter Eight entitled "Translation as transference", Rosemary tries to establish some connections between the autobiography of Borges with fictions. Borges's biography was associated with his work "Pierre Menard" and Whitman, who has a great influence on Borges' literary career. Just like Borges' imitating of Cervantes in order to replace the Spanish author by using "translation as a convenient response to transference" (Arrojo, 2018: 13), it is Borges's passion for the work of Whitman that inspires him to publish, through the earlier imitations of Whitman's work to being himself to exert his authorial power as a widely recognized "subject presumed to know" (Arrojo, 2018: 175).

Rosemary's book provides us with new perspectives for approaching the long-held clichés and the translation-related problems. Through these literary articles, we see the possibility of using fiction as a tool for translation theorization. As a professor in the program of translation, Rosemary also gives detailed suggestions for the instructors of translation programs as to how to make use of the fictional texts to guide students in the class environment. Therefore, this book bears significance for translation pedagogy as well.

Noteworthy, some phenomena commonly existed in translation practice are included either in Rosemary's analysis or revealed through her description of the fictional plots. For instance, the guidelines of the American Translator's Association for requiring the translations to be faithful to the original texts, the awful life of translators due to the low payment, the publisher's/editor's overinvolvement in translation, and translation as a manual labour and disrespected profession and so forth. These all mirror what exists in reality. Hence, the book may have some pragmatic significance for inspiring the individuals engaged in the field of translation to address such issues.

However, undergraduate students in translation studies or the novice researchers will benefit more if the introduction to Nietzsche's thought in Chapter four is moved to the first or second chapter of the book. This book is generated based on the post-Nietzschean thought in general as mentioned by Arrojo in the introduction section. Nevertheless, for those who are unfamiliar with Nietzsche's philosophy and with no such background information, they may easily lose track of the on-going discussions in the first few chapters.

Overall, the book is significant for many who are engaged in the field of translation studies, including students majored in translation and comparative literature, instructors in the translation programs, researchers and even those who have the authority to improve the poor situations of translators, as revealed in the book.

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