

The Stylistic Identity of the Metapoet: a corpus-based comparative analysis using translations of modern Greek poetry

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the stylistic identity of four translators of modern Greek poetry into English and to outline each translator's distinct stylistic profile. In line with views on the subject expressed by Malmkjær (1996) and Baker (2000) a translator's profile is seen as being composed by consistent patterns that can be identified throughout their work and which leave their personal mark on the text. A corpus-based methodology is used for the identification and exploration of these patterns, through a Specialized Corpus of English Translations of Modern Greek Poetry (SCETOMGP). This corpus contains translations by Rae Dalven, Kimon Friar, Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard (working in collaboration) and David Connolly. The source-texts are taken from C.P. Cavafy, George Seferis, Yiannis Ritsos and Odysseus Elytis, who were extensively translated during the second half of the 20th century.

The main purpose of the corpus is to facilitate direct comparison between the retranslations of the same poem. Such direct comparisons form the core of this study and have the advantage of making the issue of source-text influence on each translator directly observable, alongside their other stylistic traits. A detailed account of the theoretical views or reflections each translator has put forth is also presented. Following Holmes (1994), the translator of poetry is seen here as a meta-poet who requires skills similar to those of a critic and an original poet, and certain skills that are specific only to the translator. Consequently, the translators' views on issues of language, literature, style and translation not only provide the backdrop for exploring any stylistic patterns found in the texts, but are seen as part of their stylistic profile.

The distinguishing stylistic features for each translator are explored in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Overall word frequencies for each translator are examined, the stylistic features that are prominent in each case are identified, and their impact is considered. Special attention is also paid to the way those stylistic features that Boase-Beier (2005) calls 'universal aspects of literature' are treated by each translator. The next stage of the study involves the identification and sorting out of the patterns of stylistic features that consistently manifest in a translator's work and examining how these patterns relate to their theoretical views and reflections. In the final stage, the stylistic profile of each translator is compiled by complementing the textual and contextual data together with each translator's use of paratexts and extra-textual material.

KEYWORDS: corpus-based translation studies, translational stylistics, metapoet, poetry translation, modern Greek poetry.

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