

Cordingley, Anthony (ed.) (2013) *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, x+ 201pp., ISBN 978-1-4411-2541-5 £28.99.

With the development of Translation Studies as an independent discipline and the broadened scope of Translation Studies research, many previously marginalized translation phenomena, such as self-translation and pseudo translation, are drawing more attention. Self-translation, sometimes referred to as ‘auto-translation’ as well, is defined by Popovic as “the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself” (1976:19). Considered as a special phenomenon, it has drawn significant attention within the discipline after Toury proposed the notion of assumed translation as “all utterances which are presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on no matter what grounds” (1995:32). It is of delight that this book came out as the first “with a collection of articles in English devoted to the art of self-translation and its practitioners”, as the editor describes it (Cordingley 2013:1). Articles collected in this book focus on self-translation from different aspects and attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

This book comprises mainly four parts: general editor’s comment (p. vii); contributor details (pp. viii-x), Introduction (pp. 1-10), and the main body (pp. 11-201). The main body is divided into four parts according to different research perspectives under the headings of ‘Self-translation and literary history’ (pp. 11-60), ‘Interdisciplinary perspectives: Sociology, psychoanalysis, philosophy’ (pp. 61-110), ‘Post-colonial perspectives’ (pp. 111-156) and ‘Cosmopolitan identities/texts’ (pp.157-201).

In ‘Introduction: Self-translation, going global’ (pp.1-10) the editor distinguishes the notions of ‘self-translation’ and ‘auto-translation’, pointing out that the latter is somehow ambiguous because it implies translating automatically or by machine. In comparison, the former is more precise and emphasizes the role of the translator in the translation process. This is of great significance since it differentiates the two concepts, thus laying a solid foundation for

self-translation research by clarifying the basic notion. The editor first summarizes each of the four parts, and then talks about the general aim of the book, that is, to analyze self-translation beyond the linguistic comparison between the source text and the target text and focus on the social, historical or cultural factors that influence this phenomenon.

‘Self-translation and literary history’ (pp. 11-60), as the first part of the main body, includes three articles. In the first article ‘The self-translator as rewriter’ (pp. 11-25), Susan Bassnett challenges the dichotomy of source and target texts in TS and perceives the self-translator as a rewriter. She believes that the notion of self-translation is “problematic” because when people talk about translation, it is generally assumed that there should be an original text that exists before the translation is produced. Bassnett emphasizes that in self-translation activities, many self-translators prefer to perceive themselves as simultaneously writing one text using two languages rather than as translating a text that they have previously written into another language. In that sense, such activities can be perceived as rewriting. The production of ‘self-translated’ work is a process of writing and rewriting while most of the time the source text cannot be clearly identified. Thus, the understanding of self-translation phenomenon is limited due to our perception in TS and the vocabulary being used.

‘On mirrors, dynamics and self-translations’ (pp. 27-38) by Julio-César Santoyo lays its foundation on the concept that translation process is like looking into the mirrors and seeking reflections. The author argues that in the case of self-translation, such reflections are dynamic because self-translated works often influence the originals from two aspects: on the one hand, self-translated works are not merely rewriting for they often help writers to modify the original works; on the other hand, self-translated works also serve as the second original because many translated works into other languages are not based on the original work but the self-translated version.

‘History and the self-translator’ (pp. 39-60) examines the phenomenon of literary self-translators as a group from the historical and personal perspectives. Jan Hokenson first

puts forward that we should go beyond individual self-translators and perceive them as a group, trying to find out the ‘what, how and why’ of the group phenomenon. Then the author divides the historical drives of those self-translators into macro and micro levels: the former includes the political factors, such as royal patronage, exile, and religious reform while the latter comprises personal and literary ambitions. Examples of self-translators in different historical periods in different countries are used to illustrate the above mentioned factors.

The second part of the book titled ‘Interdisciplinary perspectives: Sociology, psychoanalysis, philosophy’ (pp. 61-110) tries to analyze self-translation from different perspectives. Written by Rainier Grutman, ‘A sociological glance at self-translation and self-translators’ (pp. 63-80) analyzes eight winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature who won the prize because of their self-translated works based on bilingualism (either exogenous or endogenous) and linguistic pairing (either symmetrical or asymmetrical). The former is about languages that self-translators work with when they move from one country and settle in another; the latter concerns the social dominance of languages that those self-translators use. The eight self-translators are classified following the above mentioned two categories in the form of a 2 x 2 table. As the result reveals that four (Mistral, Tagore, Gjellerup and Pirandello) out of eight translators are described as being “endogenous” and engaging in “asymmetrical” pairing, and the author calls for more attention to the “unequal and asymmetrical relationship between languages” (p. 76).

‘The passion of self-translation: A masochistic perspective’ (pp. 81-94) by Anthony Cordingley tries to analyze the relationship between self-translators and self-translated works from the perspective of masochism. The author uses many examples to show that displeasure and dissatisfaction exist frequently in the process of self-translation and many self-translators suffer a lot from those emotions but continue to carry out self-translation. On the basis of Freud’s psychoanalysis, the author finds out that the act of self-translation is also a result of the endeavor to subvert one’s ego or to defer gratification.

‘Translating philosophy: Vilém Flusser’s practice of multiple self-translation’ (pp. 85-109) by Rainer Guldin focuses on the self-translation of philosophical texts by Vilém Flusser. The author first points out that little attention has been paid to self-translation in the philosophical field and Flusser’s works are a typical example. The author then presents why Flusser conducted self-translation: to distance himself from the textual coherence and formal qualities of the original; to accumulate viewpoints; and economic motives and publication opportunities. By analyzing eleven versions of Flusser’s self-translated works in four languages at different stages, the author finds out that it is difficult to tell which version came first or whether two versions were written at the same time; and it is difficult to summarize the strategies applied in his translations as the factors influencing his decisions were complex.

Part Three (pp.111-156) consists of three articles analyzing self-translation from the post-colonial perspective. ‘Translated otherness, self-translated in-betweenness: Hybridity as medium versus hybridity as object in Anglophone African writing’ (pp. 113-126) by Susanne Klinger addresses the post-colonial and narratological aspects of self-translation. The author begins by distinguishing the difference between post-colonial writing and translation, and emphasizes that post-colonial writing is more inclined to blur the boundary of the source and target texts, differentiating between translation as the medium to produce the target text and translation as the end product. By analyzing linguistic hybridity in self-translated works, the author compares the discourse-level of hybridity and story-level of language and points out that the two levels may not correspond to each other. As a consequence, the author concludes that from the post-colonial perspective, self-translation is not merely the medium of production but also the object of production since it mingles the source text with the target text, which is just what self-translators do.

In “‘Why bother with the original?’: Self-translation and Scottish Gaelic poetry” (pp. 127-140), Corinna Krause focuses on self-translation between English and some minority languages (mainly Welsh, Irish, and Scottish Gaelic). The author starts by reviewing the history of self-translated Scottish Gaelic poetry into English, and the Welsh and Irish poets’

attitudes towards self-translation. She concludes that in translating practices, those translators tend to focus on the target language culture (that is, the English culture) and use adaptation frequently. Then the author analyzes the self-translation of Gaelic poetry into English and points out that due to the different status of the source and target languages, the English versions are often considered to be ‘the original’, thus debasing the status of the Gaelic original poems. The author wraps up with the question “Why bother with the original?” to express her opinion on self-translation between majority and minority languages and it can be seen that from her viewpoint, the status of the minority language is not guaranteed because readers can turn to the English version for help if there are any unfamiliar terms in Gaelic. Thus it is suggested by the author that the monolingual version of the Gaelic original should be published for the sake of the status of Gaelic language.

In ‘Indigenization and opacity: Self-translation in the Okinawan/Ryūkyūan writings of Takara Ben and Medoruma Shun’ (pp. 141-155) Mark Gibeau focuses on the self-translation between Japanese and the Okinawan languages and analyzes the works of a poet self-translator Takara Ben and a novelist self-translator Medoruma Shun. The author first poses the dilemma faced by any translators working between Japanese and Okinawan/Ryūkyūan languages, stating that they either sacrifice the indigenous features by using standardized Japanese or confine themselves to a narrow readership by using Okinawan/Ryūkyūan languages. Takara Ben and Medoruma Shun are taken as examples to show how Okinawan/Ryūkyūan languages tries to resist the dominance of Japanese through strategic opacity: Takara Ben writes the Japanese poem first and then the Ryūkyūan version, but he deliberately presents the latter at the top of the page while the former at the bottom, thus readers would be impressed by the unintelligibility of the Ryūkyūan poem in the first place; while in “Droplets” (one of his novellas), Medoruma Shun writes the main line in standard Japanese but adds a gloss of Okinawan translation, consequently readers with constant contact of the Okinawan version would pay attention to the difference between the language and Japanese. The act of Takara Ben and Medoruma Shun both emphasize the otherness of the Okinawan/Ryūkyūan languages

and the readers' inability to understand and appreciate them so as to protect the minority languages and ensure the continuation of Okinawan/Ryūkyūan image.

The last part 'Cosmopolitan identities/texts' (pp. 157-201) also consists of three articles, the focus of discussion is shifted to the identity and bilingualism of self-translators, and the poetics of their self-translated works. 'Self-translation, self-reflection, self-derision: Samuel Beckett's bilingual humor' (pp. 159-176) by Will Noonan examines the usage of humor in Beckett's self-translations. It is pointed out by the author that researches on Beckett's self-translation activity should not only be done by comparing his French and English texts, but also by examining individual texts in either French or English, especially in the usage of humor. Based on this, the author analyzes the language use in his French or English self-translated texts and finds out that Beckett's choices and style in translating humor come from his pursuit of aesthetics. By reading the individual texts within one language, either English or French, readers can feel that Beckett is monolingual and mono-cultural, but the intertextuality between his English and French version reveals that he is multilingual and multicultural.

'Writing in translation: A new self in a second language' (pp. 177-187) by Elin-Maria Evangelista examines the loss and gain in terms of identity when authors self-translate. She begins by introducing the discussion on *Lost in Translation* by Mary Besemeres and states that it is widely accepted that a certain degree of loss is resulted in (self-)translation in terms of self, space and the first language. However, the author then lists a large number of works by other researchers to illustrate that in spite of the loss, if we can perceive self-translation from the other way round, gains can also be found as the authors discover a new self, the enjoyment of writing in another language, the enhanced understanding and mastering of another language, as well as the possession of a double life outlook. At last, the author uses her own experience to emphasize that writing in another language in the form of self-translation provides an alternative to investigate the self.

In the last chapter 'Self-translation as broken narrativity: Towards an understanding of the self's multilingual dialogue' (pp. 189-201), Aurelia Klimkiewicz perceives self-translation as the dialogue of the translator between different languages and analyzes the process of self-translation. Focusing on exiled translators such as Nancy Houston, Milan Kundera, and Vladimir Nabokov, the author examines how they self-translated or conducted multilingual writing and concludes that as a writing strategy, self-translation can help shape the multilingual subjectivity of the translator, promote the emergence of new genres and broaden the scope of TS.

Having long been neglected, self-translation was not considered as translation proper, but in this collection, we can see that different scholars from different regions have paid due attention to the study of self-translation, thus working together to draw attention to self-translation and related issues in TS. Apart from this collection, there are some other collected papers on self-translation, for example, the twenty-fifth volume of *In Other Words: The Journal for Literary Translators*, which was devoted wholly to self-translation (Hopkinson 2005); and *Tradução em revista*'s recently published special issue on self-translation (Antunes and Grutman 2014) and others. Thus, this volume can echo what has been published and further promote research in self-translation.

More significantly, this collection moves beyond the traditional comparative approach and focuses more on theoretical construction and the analyses of this phenomenon are conducted from different angles. Generally speaking, this book takes a descriptive view on self-translation, examines different acts of self-translation mainly by re-contextualizing the acts and products of self-translation and tries to seek the historical and cultural factors underlying those activities. Different theoretical aspects are applied in the analysis of self-translation, including translation as rewriting, the sociological approach, masocritical perspective, post-colonialism, and cosmopolitan identities, all of which demonstrate a thorough examination of self-translation.

On the other hand, the papers address self-translation from different perspectives, covering the name and nature of self-translation (by Susan Bassnett), the history of self-translation (by Jan Hokenson), the motivations of self-translators (by Anthony Cordingley), as well as self-translation in various genres and disciplines, including poetry, fiction (by Corinna Krause, Mark Gibeau) and philosophy (Rainer Guldin). Moreover, it not only considers the interlingual self-translation phenomenon between majority languages such as English and French, but also the intralingual self-translation in minority languages like the Okinawan/Ryūkyūan languages, which is also a sign of paying attention to peripheral phenomena in TS since interlingual translation is considered as the ‘translation proper’ while intralingual translation is often ignored. The hybridity of culture and language makes it intriguing to explore issues concerning self-translation.

Another topic being explored in this volume is the hybridity of identity. If a work is translated by another person, most of the time, the translators are more inclined to preserve the lexical units of the original texts; while when a person is both the author and the translator, the translator tends to have more freedom and be more adaptive when translating his or her own work. This opens a new avenue for finer-grained research and discussion on a whole new set of issues such as: how the self-translator mingles between hybrid languages and cultures, how the self-translator deals with the hybrid identity of being as both the author and the translator.

Last but not least, there are certain typos, which can be corrected if it is to have a second edition. For example, in the introduction by the editor, he wrote “the third group of articles, listed under the rubric ‘Cosmopolitan identities/texts,’” (p. 7) but it can be seen that here “third” should actually be “fourth”; and in Chapter 11, the author of the article uses a story of a Chinese writer named Xiaolu Guo, but in the next paragraph, the family name ‘Guo’ is misspelled as ‘Gou’ (p. 182).

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