

Vorderobermeier, Gisella M., ed. (2014) *Remapping Habitus in Translation Studies. Approaches to Translation Studies Vol. 40*. Amsterdam/New York: Brill/Rodopi. 235pp. ISBN13: 978-90-420-3842-4 (paperback) €55.00

In a short lecture at the University of Oslo in 1995, Bourdieu describes *habitus* as how humans and societies embody and live their physical and social space through processes of social conditioning which are underpinned by notions of political and cultural capital (1995: 10). As Bourdieu explained in this lecture, any *habitus* risks reiterating its premises of formation as intrinsic rather than relational state of society, (thus justifying class and other geo-political inequalities)—if not analysed and interrogated. Nearly two decades later, *Remapping Habitus in Translation Studies* (2014), a volume of twelve essays, presents itself as a critical engagement setting out to do just that: to analyse and interrogate the profound influence that Bourdieu’s dynamic notion of *habitus* has had in Translation Studies, including the risk of it becoming a tautological reiteration of itself. The collection editor Giselle Vorderobermeier thus presents the aim of this volume as foregrounding theoretical and methodological rigour to “remap” why *habitus* in Translation Studies is “a concept which upsets” and thus still with “potential to make a difference to research agendas”(as stated on back cover). With this in mind, I reviewed this volume, and asked myself: what new insights do the volume’s critical engagements really add to the already expansive field of *habitus* within Translation Studies as “theory of practice as practice” (p.12)? For scholars new to the sociology of translation, is this volume a useful point of departure for further study?

Vorderobermeier opens the volume with a highly informative introduction organised into three sections: the first, the genealogy of Bourdieu’s evolving conception of *habitus*, alongside the plethora of seminal works in the field; the second, the *habitus* concept in Translation Studies alongside sociology in translation; and third, the aims of the volume, with a critical synopsis of each essay in the volume. For scholars familiar with *habitus*, this introduction offers a rich, contextualised and thought-provoking overview of how *habitus* has been (self-reflexively) interrogated and applied in the sociology of Translation Studies from a range of theoretical and inter/disciplinary perspectives. For scholars new to the field, Vorderobermeier’s productive insights into the *habitus* of Translation Studies scholarship *on habitus* are well worth a second (or third) read—before reading the essays and after reading the essays. With deeper knowledge of *habitus* gleaned from reading the other eleven essays

comes further appreciation of the intricacies of Vorderobermeier's discussions of *habitus* within the field of Translation Studies, which she explains eruditely in this introduction.

The volume is divided up into four parts: General Theoretical Concepts (Part 1); Intra-Disciplinary Inter-relations (Re)Visited (Part 2); The Relationship between Theory and Empirical Studies (Part 3), and Political and/or Critical Aspects of the *Habitus* Concept in Translation Studies (Part 4). The two essays in Part 1 critically survey the overlaps and tensions in three fields: the field of translation as praxis, the field of Translation Studies, and that of the translator and her/his (sense of) identity. In the first essay, Gouanic draws on the case studies of two French translators Coindreau and Duhamel to ask: is Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* soluble in Translation Studies? After explaining Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *illusio* (pp. 30-32), Gouanic interrogates the extent that these "conceptual tools" do actually bear on a translator's professional *habitus*, in that "the field of translation...exists only in an embryonic state" (p. 39). He thus questions the ethics of framing these three fields as intrinsically conjoined *habitus*, in that the tautological "hidden agendas" of those using *habitus* on a theoretical basis could influence how the praxis of translation is understood to be outside of translators' specific and individual contexts (ibid).

In the second essay, Sela-Sheffy takes as a point of departure the highly individuated identity dynamics influencing the different practices of "elite" and "non-elite" translators with reference to her long-standing research on Israeli translators (p.45). With the "apparent discrepancy between the enormous potential of translators' cultural power and their actual feeling of being deprived of it" (p. 44), Sela-Sheffy turns to and interrogates *habitus* as a conceptual tool for carrying out micro-sociological research on the impact of translator identity on translation praxis, which is shaped by a sense of "suspended professionalization" (p. 52). Her essay, along with Gouanic's contribution, is a thought-provoking interrogation of the conceptualisation of *habitus* in Translation Studies whose relationality to the practices of translators emerges as potentially remote as it is dynamic.

From the general theory expounded in Part 1, Part 2 focuses on what Vorderobermeier names as the "points of contact with other approaches in translation studies" (p. 17): how *habitus* works from inter-disciplinary perspectives. Using a case study of Arabic translations of Shakespeare's drama, Sameh Hanna explores the implications of *habitus* vis-à-vis understanding the agency of translators and translation scholars (p. 59). Drawing on the Bourdieusian concepts of *hexis*—broadly, patterns of postures (p. 67)—and *doxa*—what is

thinkable or sayable in any particular field, Hanna demonstrates how insights into “modes of translatorial agency” are gained through the analysis of translators’ representations of their own work, alongside their specific use of lexical, syntactic and stylistic patternings (p. 68). Through his detailed analysis of the cultural and historical contexts of the Arabic translations of Shakespeare in his study, Hanna argues that an ethics of conscientious self-reflexivity on the part of the “*habitus*” scholar operating within “the lingua franca of academia” (p. 70) must emerge to avoid the specific contexts of the research in hand becoming a tautological cipher of *habitus* as a theory in Translation Studies.

Continuing with the concept of *hexis*, Kalliopi Pasmazi examines the Greek translation of Louis de Bernières’ historical novel *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin*. In her essay, Pasmazi not only provides an insightful background into the extremely charged politics of translating discourses of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), she clarifies the notion of *hexis* as “enacted and re-enacted by the individual to arrive at honour and prestige” (p. 79) in the contexts of translation. Pasmazi’s detailed discussion of *hexis* is particularly welcome for scholars new and familiar to *habitus* for two reasons: one, her discussion does not assume prior knowledge of *hexis*, and two, her analysis of the translator’s *hexis* as perceptible in the translation of *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin* helps us grasp how *hexis* and *habitus* can actually be put to “work” as “a theory of practice as a practice” (p.12).

From another perspective of embodied agency in translation, Nadja Grbić analyses the construction of the professional sphere of sign language interpreters in Austria over a period of twenty years, which led to the foundation of their association in 1998 (p. 106). After introducing Gieryn’s concept of “boundary theory,” Grbić then interrogates whether the notion of *habitus* can help explain how sign language interpreters—CODAs¹ and social workers—have co-created a profession as a shared evolving space alongside their sense of boundaries, or differentialities from each other (p. 106). By using concepts of boundaries and *habitus* alongside each other, Grbić both documents an important historical moment within the field of sign language scholarship and sheds light on potential new fields of inquiry into (sign language) translation as lived community and professional praxis.

Focusing on the non-human as well as human agency, Kristina Abdallah draws on Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* and Latour’s concept of agency actors to examine the work trajectories of

¹ The acronym stands for ‘Children Of Deaf Adults’ (p. 97).

eight Finnish translators. In her essay, Abdallah very usefully explains Bourdieu's notion of *hysteresis of habitus* (1984) as "a rupture between *habitus* and field" (p. 120) to contextualise the sense of conflict felt by translators between quality and speed, their own professional ethic and the demands of their increasingly neo-liberal globalised commercial workplaces (ibid). Here Abdallah highlights how the Bourdieusian notion of *hysteresis* foregrounds the emotionally generated aspects of agency and personal dispositions as integral to field work analysis, thus showcasing *habitus* as a useful and dynamic conceptual tool for mapping the negative aspects of workplace change (alongside the positive) in different commercial settings of translation.

Part 3 concerns the methodological aspects of engaging *habitus* alongside empirical (case) studies. From a perspective of oral history as "a history about people", Torikai Kumiko works to identify "the relationship between *habitus* and practice" (p. 145) from her interviews with five Japanese interpreters in post-World War Two Japan. In this essay, Komiko highlights the subjectivity of a "life-writing" researcher as *habitus* in its own right, which does not preclude the validity of findings drawn about the *habitus* of the interpreter. Highlighting the frequent "avoidance of a certain topic or silence" (p. 144) as a crucial aspect of the *habitus* of the interpreters interviewed, Komiko thus offers salient insights into the *habitus* of interpreters living with the psychic effects of sustained exposure to scenes of war and/or trauma.

Returning to the impact of *habitus* on research, Vorderobermaier works to conceptualise "the process of reconstructing literary translators' *habitus* from empirical material collected explicitly for this purpose" (p. 149) alongside Bourdieu's concept of *illusio* or "tacit recognition of the stakes of the game" (Bourdieu 1990: 110). After explaining the intricacies of Bourdieu's approaches to time in any given *habitus*, Vorderobermaier works to discern: are literary translators really born into the game? How conscious or unconscious was their entry into the field? (p. 155). While alluding to how absence from the field often slips out of the scope of such research, Vorderobermaier presents *habitus* as a robust, "theoretically grounded analytical framework which accommodates a wide range of data otherwise difficult to collate, connect and analyse" (p. 159), thus widening the scope of empirical work in Translation Studies and other fields, along with the concept of *habitus*.

In the third essay in Part 3, Vasso Yannakopoulou debates the subject of style in Translation Studies as an under-developed field of research (p. 163). With *habitus* as a theoretical tool, Yannakopoulou explores Yorgos Himonas' rendering of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into Greek

(1988) using a macro-micro approach to analyse Himonas' choices—and “deviances”—when rendering Shakespeare's text. Through his close readings, Yannakopoulou contends that *habitus* can “account for” a number of macro contextual factors at play when translators effect micro-level stylistic choices, thus opening thought to consider *habitus* alongside larger corpora as well as “one-off” cases like Himonas' translation, which over time, can dramatically effect change and a shift dynamics in a particular field.

The final part of this collection, Part 4, concerns the political and critical aspects of the *habitus* concept in Translation Studies. Moira Inghilleri revisits *habitus* alongside American philosopher John Dewey's considerations of “the role of habit in making sense of social life (p. 186). After establishing commonalities and differences between “*habitus*” and “habit”, Inghilleri investigates the issue of translators' impartiality within an ethical framework of “justice-seeking interpreting” (p. 194), with the Postville case as her focus. As notions of borders and walls between nations are prevalent discourses in many parts of the world, this particular case study serves as an insightful and timely reminder that notions of *habitus* and habit can help scholars of translation—and translators—envisage “a creative praxis” (p. 198) through which hidden power operates yet through which, transformative shifts can occur.

Concluding the collection is María del Carmen África Vidal Claramonte who interrogates “the historian as translator” by engaging Bourdieu's notions of *habitus* with “the Translation of History, a dangerous field” (p. 206). With the premise that “history and translation are meaning systems through which we construct the meaning of the past” (p.203), Vidal Claramonte analyses and critiques historian Luis Suárez's entry on Francisco Franco, in the *Diccionario biográfico español* in the Real Academia de la Historia in Spain as a re-writing of history. In her critique of Suárez's entry, which euphemises Franco's rule as a dictator, Vidal Claramonte draws on *habitus* to conceptualise discourse and language as systems of power which include, exclude, legitimate or prohibit (p. 207). In this way, she demonstrates how particular given conditions of an institution of knowledge—such as the Real Academia de la Historia—allow one person's own (political) *habitus* to in effect erase the traces of many others', with huge implications for reparative justice and commemorative memory.

Returning to the volume title, *Remapping Habitus in Translation Studies* offers an impressive array of theoretical perspectives on *habitus* within a wide range of translator and interpreter settings. With many essays' intersecting many inter-disciplinary perspectives, translation studies scholars of all (sub) disciplines will find a wealth of insights to consider within their

own research contexts. Importantly, the aim of collection—to analyse and interrogate *habitus* as a theory “which upsets”—is, by and large, adhered to, illustrated by the commitment to all contributors to self-reflexivity in their detailed and insightful analyses. This notion of self-reflexivity helps the reader make potential connections between the essays, although clearly written by different individual scholars with extremely varied research agendas. As observed by Hanna, “the *habitus* of the mapper should not itself escape mapping” (p. 70). This collection thus interrogates the impact of researcher agency as integral to engagement with *habitus* at every turn. In this way, this volume offers the scholar new and familiar with *habitus* valuable conceptual space to remap their own *habitus* in Translation Studies within their own research contexts. It is a very relevant, enriching and timely contribution.

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