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A review of Francis R. Jones, *Poetry Translating as Expert Action*

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Francis R. Jones. *Poetry Translating as Expert Action: Processes, Priorities and Networks*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011, xvi + 227 pp. US\$135.00, hardback, ISBN 978-90-272-2441-5.

Poetry is the essence of a culture; as a consequence, the translation of poetry exerts great influence on cultural exchanges and has never failed to attract the attention of scholars specializing in Translation Studies. This book by Francis R. Jones of Newcastle University in the UK focuses on the translation of poetry mainly from two countries: the Netherlands and Bosnia. By using think-aloud protocol and interviews, this book obtains real data to illuminate how professional poetry translators actually translate; it also analyzes the socio-cultural elements that influence a translator's working mechanism.

The book comprises the following parts: a Preface (pp. i to xvi); Chapter One: Introduction (pp. 1-15); Chapter Two: Poetry in a Political Preface (pp. 17-50); Chapter Three: Poetry Translation Webs (pp. 51-83); Chapter Four: Talks with Translators (pp. 85-107); Chapter Five: Five Translators Translate (pp. 109-146); Chapter Six: Translating Rhyme and Rhythm (pp. 147-172); a Conclusion (pp. 173-200); References (pp. 201-216) and an Index (pp. 217-227).

In examining the important topic of poetry translation, the book does not evaluate whether or not equivalence between the source text and the target text has been achieved, nor does it merely compare linguistic features of different translated versions. Instead, it probes into the decision-making process of poetry translators and examines (1) the choices they make during the process, such as the images translators tend to create or how they deal with rhyme, and (2) the factors underlying those choices, for example it is found that a translator who knows that the translation will be published generally acts differently from one who does not know this, the former tending to be more careful in the choice of words and to spend more time on revision. With the development of Translation Studies as an independent discipline, more attention has shifted to analyzing the translating action – how and why translators work the way they do – and the content of Jones's book corresponds to this new trend in the field. On the other hand, all the translators involved in the experiments in this book have already published translations of poetry and are known as “professionals” or “experts”. They are well-trained and have accumulated much experience in poetry translation, thus the translating action is not random but well-organized, making the conclusions drawn in this book more convincing and reliable.

Moreover, the theoretical framework adopted for analysis is quite pioneering. Unlike other books which set up a theoretical orientation, say within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics or Deconstructionism, this book first tries to give an assumed theoretical framework that provides several networks of agents that impact on the translating action of professional poetry translators, such as publishers, editors, readers, reviewers and so on. The

author then conducts empirical research to test this theoretical foundation, after which revisions for further enhancing the theoretical framework are put forward.

Poetry Translating as Expert Action presents an overall view of poetry translation, which takes into account the translator or the subject as well as the external factors influencing the translator. The internal research is conducted from a cognitive perspective while the external research is conducted from a sociological one: the cognitive priority lies in the understanding of poetry translators as well as the skills employed by translators. With the use of think-aloud protocol and interviews, translators can say aloud what they are thinking during the process and reflect on the process, thus how the choices are made or what translators think they do and what they actually do are examined; the sociological priority mainly takes into account the social factors that influence professional translators and those networks are sorted into different categories according to the level of influence, so that it is clear which factors exert more influence on translators and should be paid more attention. Moreover, the research also employs qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze poetry translation. The author not only focuses on translations of the same poem by different translators but also on translations of different poems by the same translator; thus a range of factors and influences are discussed and analyzed. By focusing on both sides, more balanced data is collected and this ensures the objectivity and thoroughness of the analysis.

Last but not least, the author is able to broaden the academic scope of his research by moving beyond the scenario of professional poetry translation. Though the book is mainly concerned with poetry translation, the analysis is carried out in such a way as to provide guidance not only to poetry translators but also to translators of other genres, whose translating action is influenced by similar networks.