



Eurozine Editorial

Politics of translation

Introduction

Our understanding of the field of translation studies has in the recent years taken on many more meanings and now encompasses spheres beyond the usual textual dimension: Translation today is as much about the translation of cultural, political, and historical contexts and concepts as it is about language. This focal point, which draws upon talks and lectures held at the 16th Meeting of Cultural Journals in Belgrade, includes articles on the recent developments and future trends of translation and new critical theory on translation, as well as texts that apply these concepts to case studies, for example, of Serbia and Turkey.

Translation touches upon political and cultural dimensions that concern not only the translations of languages but of cultural contexts between different countries, cultures, and political systems. Since the question of translation has become a politically and culturally crucial question, one can argue that translation can be regarded as a central metaphor for some of the most pressing tasks confronting us at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Translation points at how different languages, different cultures, different political contexts, can be put together in such a way as to provide for mutual intelligibility but without having at the same time to sacrifice difference in the interest of a blind assimilation. Translation, in this sense, is about the creation of new cultural and political maps, the establishment of shared territories and of points of articulation, the development of a border reason, as opposed to the simple acceptance of the reason of the borders. It is about the right to be different, where homogenization would mean an offence, and the right to be equal, where the dwelling upon difference would be synonymous with oppression or with the prevalence of power politics.

This focal point draws upon talks and lectures held at the 16th Meeting of Cultural Journals in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro in October 2003, entitled: "Europe and the Balkans: Politics of Translation", in which the challenges and perspectives of translation today were put to the test. In the texts presented here, António Sousa Ribeiro traces the rise of translation studies from the margins of linguistic departments to its current central status in the field of cultural studies and critical theory. Translation has become a fundamental and dominant metaphor for our time that ties in with the challenges posed through cultural, political, and linguistic fragmentation in a global setting.

"Translating the translation" by Hasan Bülent Kahraman charts the current trends that have shaped the field of translation studies in Turkey: multiculturalism, studies of the subaltern, minority and feminist studies have all altered the outlook and emphasis of translation studies as a discipline.

Tomislav Longinovic in turn exemplifies the unacknowledged symmetries between Serbia and America and argues that translation can open up spaces "in between different cultures". In order to do so, however, translation must always retain and respect the alterity of the foreign culture, whilst reversing the trends of hegemonic monolingualism.

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