

# Translation Review 77/78

2009

Special Latin American Issue



***Translation Review***  
The University of Texas at Dallas

**Editors**

Rainer Schulte  
Dennis Kratz

**Associate Editor**

Charles Hatfield

**Book Review Editor**

Gregary Racz

**Assistant Editor**

Christopher Speck

**International  
Advisory Board**

John Biguenet  
Ming Dong Gu  
Samuel Hazo  
Elizabeth Gamble Miller  
Margaret Sayers Peden  
Marilyn Gaddis Rose  
James P. White

**Production Staff**

Phyllis Lane  
Keith Heckathorn  
Lindy Jolly

**Graphic Designer**

Michelle Long

**Copy Editor**

Sandra Smith

All correspondence and inquiries should be directed to  
The University of Texas at Dallas  
*Translation Review*, JO 51  
800 West Campbell Road  
Richardson, TX 75080-3021  
Telephone: (972) 883-2092  
Fax: (972) 883-6303  
E-mail: [translation.review@utdallas.edu](mailto:translation.review@utdallas.edu)

*Translation Review* is published twice yearly by The Center for Translation Studies at The University of Texas at Dallas and the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA).

Articles in *Translation Review* are refereed.

The publication of this issue of *Translation Review* is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



**Subscriptions and Back Issues**

Subscriptions to individuals are included with membership in ALTA.  
Special institutional and library subscriptions are available.  
Back issues may be ordered. ISSN 0737-4836

Copyright © 2009 by *Translation Review*  
*The University of Texas at Dallas is an equal opportunity/affirmative action university.*

**Jeremy Munday.** *Style and Ideology in Translation: Latin American Writing in English.* New York: Routledge, 2007. 261 pp.

Dr. Jeremy Munday, Senior Lecturer in Spanish Studies and Translation at the University of Leeds, UK, is both a professor of translation studies and a translator, primarily of Latin American literature. In his considerations of translating and translation studies (TS), he thus combines research in primary areas such as the theory of translation (emphasis on descriptive translation studies), discourse analysis, ideology operative in the translation of literary and political works, corpus-based analyses, and history of literary translators in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; pedagogy (theory and method); and praxis (e.g., fifteen of the translated stories in the *Picador Book of Latin American Short Stories* and *Memories of Altagracia*, a novel by Venezuelan writer Salvador Garmendia). Prior to the publication of the present volume, *Style and Ideology in Translation: Latin American Writing in English*, Munday had authored and co-authored two other useful books for specialists and students of translation: *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories*

and Applications (2001) and *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book* (2004, with Basil Hatim).

*Style and Ideology in Translation: Latin American Writing in English* consists of an Introduction, eight chapters, and a Conclusion. The Introduction is a clear, tightly packed statement of purpose, method and methodology, delimiting the scope and anticipating the significance and contribution of the study at hand. The issues to be explored via specific case studies depart from and feed back into broader TS theoretical considerations, thereby stretching the map of potentially fruitful inquiry into important new aspects of translation studies. As stated up front, “The subject of this book is how and why style differs in translations, how we might approach the subject of style and choice by centring on the translator and the composition of the target text (TT)” (1). Munday’s work is concerned with “why there is so much variation between translators working in related geographical, historical, and social settings,” and “[i]t sets out to study and classify these differences in an attempt to identify features of style in translated texts and of the style of specific translators” (6). Rather than provide “a stylistic inventory of translation,” his focus is on exploring “the possible causes of variation” and “the theoretical implications for translation of work that has been carried out within (mainly monolingual) stylistics and critical discourse analysis” (6).

The methodology is eclectic and interdisciplinary (ranging from TS to translational stylistics, narratology, critical discourse analysis, linguistics, and corpus-based studies) and frankly honest in “admitting that this book, while tackling some of the theoretical issues, will doubtless raise more questions than it can possibly answer” (7). But the central questions posed by Munday are indeed intriguing:

What are the prominent characteristics of the style, or “linguistic fingerprint,” of a translator in comparison with the style of the ST [source text] author and of other translators?

Given that texts function within specific socio-cultural and ideological contexts, what is the relationship of the style of the translation to the environments of the target texts, with specific reference to modern Latin American writing? In other words, how far is it possible to determine the impact of external factors on the translators’ decision-making? What insights might our model of analysis provide into major issues of translation theory, such as the general patterns or “universals”

of translated language, variation of the voice of an author translated by different translators or manipulation of political ideology in translation?  
(7)

The Introduction and first two chapters (a theoretical and methodological priming) do a thorough job of defining the terminology so that the reader understands exactly what Munday means and the context for his later case studies. “Style,” for example, is to be understood as “the linguistic fingerprint of an individual translator or of translations, those linguistic elements that make a translated text or series of texts identifiably the work of a particular individual or indeed genre” (7). Yet, consistent with the exploratory intent of the book (which in the end warrants a final, summative disclaimer against generalized determinism), Munday is careful throughout in balancing the likelihood of the translations that *must be* against the more unpredictable, and therefore elusive, outcomes shaped by the “poetic sensitivity and taste” that each translator brings to bear on a given translation (231). Another example of how Munday clarifies his terms for the reader is that “[i]deology here is to be understood not in the Marxist sense of the struggle of ideas of a political or economic class or system but in a wider, semiotic sense to mean a system of beliefs that informs the individual’s world view that is then realized linguistically” (8). This broader working definition supplies Munday with the latitude he will require in dealing with key translators of Latin American literature, political writings, and film from the pre-Boom through the present.

Chapter 1, “Discursive Presence, Voice, and Style in Translation,” and Chapter 2, “Ideological Macro-Context in the Translation of Latin America,” flesh out the theoretical foundations, with useful visual schema, upon which the case studies to follow will be predicated. Together, the chapters provide a theoretical synopsis of significant translation (and, by extension, closely related readerly and writerly) issues that is worth reading on its own. “Style” in translation theory is clarified, acknowledging the value and durability of pioneers such as Nida and Tabor, who had defined it in *The Theory and Practice of Translating* (1969) as “the patterning of choices made by a particular author within the resources and limitations of the language and of the literary genre in which he [sic] is working. It is the style which gives to a text its uniqueness and which relates the text personally to its author” (28). This definition is extended by Munday to TS as the “motivated

and unmotivated patterns of selections in the TT [target text] that reveal the concealed or disguised discursive presence of the translator” (35), which builds upon the recent thinking and corpora-based methodology of Mona Baker, who had asked “how can we best distinguish stylistic elements which are attributable only to the translator from those which simply reflect the source author’s style, general source language preferences, or the poetics and preferences of a particular subset of translators?” (36). From such theoretical considerations in the opening chapter, Chapter 2 links the “functional conception of style (. . .) to the socio-cultural environment and ideology of which translation is a part,” using critical discourse analysis as a methodology for “uncovering the implicit ideology [i.e., ‘the knowledge, beliefs, and value systems of the individual and the society in which he or she operates’] encoded in language” (43, 44). Such a “context model allows for variability of response from different translators and even of response from the individual translator” (48), laying the groundwork for the interplay between determinacy and indeterminacy in translation stylistics. This second chapter provides an abridged and useful history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Latin American literature in (primarily North American) English, highlighting the Boom writers, institutional patronage (e.g., the key role of the Center for Inter-American Relations, CIAR), and the practices and training of literary translators, from a seminal precursor to role players to those who later emerged as translation stars from that period of time.

The case studies constituted by the five subsequent chapters focus on the product-shaping agency of “the individuality or variability of the style of the translator” and “the impact that ideology may have exerted on the decisions that have been made,” providing a provisional model for such key considerations (64). Each theory-based case study is informative and insightful, and together they also provide a fascinating historical narrative of just how and by whom much of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Latin American literature was brought into American English. In Chapter 3, “The Classic Translator Pre-1960: Harriet de Onis,” for example, we read about her influence on renowned translator Gregory Rabassa, at the time a graduate student at Columbia University working for *Odyssey Review*, when she offered him unadorned advice on how to proceed: “Don’t stick too close to the text (. . .) but at the same time don’t be too free and easy” (65). We also learn about the extent to which “[t]he whole image of Latin America in English was affected by Onis’s evaluations

and preferences” and about her (corpus-confirmed) style in translation: “remarkably rich lexicon, her propensity towards dynamic verb choices, compound pre-modifiers that condense the TT, and poetic devices such as rhythm and alliteration” (92, 93).

The following chapter case studies lead the reader into the work of numerous giants, both the authors and some of their translators, as well as into other areas of fruitful inquiry:

Chapter 4. One Author, Many Voices: The Voice of García Márquez Through His Many Translators (Rabassa, Grossman; reviewer’s parenthetical additions)

Chapter 5. One Translator, Many Authors: The “Controlled Schizophrenia” of Gregory Rabassa

Chapter 6. Political Ideology and Translation (from Rodó and Peden to Dorfman and Mattelart’s *Cómo leer al Pato Donald*, to subcomandante Marcos and political texts from the Zapatista National Liberation Army, to a Castro communiqué)

Chapter 7. Style in Audiovisual Translation (two Latin American films—*No se lo digas a nadie* [Lombardi 1998] and *Fresa y chocolate* [Gutiérrez Alea and Tabío 1993]—with a close analysis of gay cross-linguistic identity “in a macho or repressive society,” 178)

Chapter 8. Translation and Identity (Cabrera Infante and Levine, Fuentes and MacAdam, Dorfman and Dorfman, Cisneros and Poniatowska; a chapter that considers “texts that are run through by hybridity, where SL and TL mix,” where “authorship is openly complex” and “the freedom of expression is a function of the permissive presence of the author,” 224, 225)

This last chapter, which explores the distinctive cases of author-translator collaborations, self-translation, and translation of hybrid SL [source language] texts whose dominant peritextual source culture may be either English or Spanish, such that we can arrive at either an Engspan or a Spanglish form of expression, leads to a consideration that “the most pertinent issues may not be whether, for instance, what we previously thought of as relatively fixed qualities of gender and nationality are

influential in the style of a translator but rather those places where the boundaries of source and target, author and translator become most blurred” (197). Here the main issue is that of “translation and shifting identity, where it is not so clear what is original and what is translation” (198).

Munday’s book successfully weaves together translation history, sociology, ideology, methodology, criticism, and theory. In doing so, it also serves a pedagogical function by providing the reader *qua* translator or would-be-translator with a compendium of “best practices,” as critically substantiated through the close and rich analysis of the work of many of our finest translators from Spanish to English. Given the breadth and depth of the book—the polyphony represented by the case studies—Munday’s own mind-style ranges from straightforward, fluid prose to the more demanding stylistics of theoretical TS discourse:

The point of view model, based on the categories of systemic-functional grammar, is a useful tool for translational stylistics in that it allows categorization of micro-shifts according to the function at the higher level of narrative organization and focalization. It is interesting that there seems to be little obvious shift in evaluation on the ideological plane through modality choices, nor indeed of mind style through an alteration of the transitivity patterns. (229-230)

Analytically rigorous and rewarding, informative and insightful, well researched and well documented, Jeremy Munday’s *Style and Ideology in Translation: Latin American Writing in English* is a book that requires, and is worthy of, careful reading and re-reading. It represents a timely and significant contribution to translation studies while at the same time encouraging additional work in translational stylistics, which no doubt can contribute to our “understanding in greater depth the nature of translation” (232). When dealing with literary translation criticism *per se*, broadly writ, it is an exemplar of the genre.

– Michael Scott Doyle

