THE WORK OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

Offering an original reconceptualization of literary translation, Clive Scott argues against traditional approaches to the theory and practice of translation. Instead, he suggests that translation should attend more to the phenomenology of reading, triggering creative textual thinking in the responsive reader rather than testing the hermeneutic skills of the professional translator. In this new guise, translation enlist the reader as an active participant in the constant re-fashioning of the text’s structural, associative, intertextual and intersensory possibilities, so that our larger understanding of ecology, anthropology, comparative literature and aesthetics is fundamentally transformed and our sense of the expressive resources of language is radically extended. Literary translation thus assumes an existential value which takes us beyond the text itself to how it situates us in the world, and what part it plays in the geography of human relationships.

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for Sophie, Ben, Sam and Tom
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A Note on the Text

The acronyms ST, TT, SL, TL have been used throughout the text for ‘source text’, ‘target text’, ‘source language’ and ‘target language’ respectively. These terms are standard currency in the literature of translation studies, and avoid the ambiguities and unwanted implications of alternatives such as ‘original’, ‘translation’, ‘translated text’, ‘language of the original’; for these reasons, it is desirable that they should be used consistently throughout the text. The use of acronyms for these terms is also standard practice in the field.

I should emphasize that I use these terms and their acronyms purely for convenience and to avoid ambiguity. Ideologically they hardly square with my persuasions: I do not, for example, believe that the so-called source text should be thought of as the (exclusive) source/origin of the texts that grow out of it, nor, indeed, of its own text; nor do I believe that a translation is a target, that it desires to be a *ne plus ultra*, that it is implicitly inscribed within a scale of success.

In the matter of translations of critical and poetic texts, where no reference is given to standard translations, they are my own (and are given in parentheses without quotation marks). Occasionally I resort to my own translation because I find the standard translation misleading.