

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 enlists the reader as an active participant in the constant re-fashioning of the text's structural, associative, intertextual and inter-sensory 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.

CLIVE SCOTT is Professor Emeritus of European Literature at the University of East Anglia and a Fellow of the British Academy. His previous publications include *Translating Baudelaire* (2000), *Channel Crossings: French and English Poetry in Dialogue 1550–2000* (2002), *Translating Rimbaud's 'Illuminations'* (2006), *Street Photography: From Atget to Cartier-Bresson* (2007), *Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading* (Cambridge, 2012), *Translating the Perception of Text: Literary Translation and Phenomenology* (2012), and *Translating Apollinaire* (2014).

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42682-4 — The Work of Literary Translation
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CLIVE SCOTT

University of East Anglia



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CAMBRIDGE
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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108426824

DOI: 10.1017/9781108678162

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow, Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Scott, Clive, 1943– author.

TITLE: The work of literary translation / Clive Scott.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2018. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017057523 | ISBN 9781108426824 (hardback)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Translating and interpreting. | Literature – Translations – History and criticism. | BISAC: LITERARY CRITICISM / European / General.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PN241 .S37 2018 | DDC 418/.04–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017057523>

ISBN 978-1-108-42682-4 Hardback

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for Sophie, Ben, Sam and Tom

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978-1-108-42682-4 — The Work of Literary Translation
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Acknowledgements

My thanks go to:

Taylor and Francis, for permission to republish, in revised form, an article which originally appeared in *Dix-Neuf*, 19/3, 2015, 294–311, entitled ‘Translating the Nineteenth Century: A Poetics of Eco-Translation’ and which is here incorporated into Chapter 1 (‘Understanding Translation as an Eco-Poetics’) (www.tandfonline.com);

Graham Nelson, Managing Editor of *Legenda*, for permission to re-use, in modified form, my analysis of French translations of a passage from Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, which originally appeared in a contribution to *Lucidity: Essays in Honour of Alison Finch* (ed. Ian James and Emma Wilson), published by *Legenda* in 2016, and which now forms part of Chapter 2 (‘Translation as an Agent of Anthropological/Ethnographic Awareness’);

the Editor of *Style*, for permission to re-use analyses of lines from Apollinaire’s ‘Les Soupirs du servent de Dakar’ (*Calligrammes*, 1918) and of the second stanza of Lamartine’s ‘Le Vallon’ (*Méditations poétiques*, 1820) in Chapters 2 and 6 (‘Translating and Situating the Self: Punctuation and Rhythm’) respectively. These analyses first appeared in *Style*, 49/1, 2015, 46–64, in an article entitled ‘The Rhythms of Free Verse and the Rhythms of Translation’;

the Editor of *Palimpsestes*, for permission to re-use analyses of Rimbaud’s ‘Le Dormeur du val’, Thomas Kinsella’s ‘Finistère’ (1972) and A. E. Housman’s ‘Into my heart an air that kills’ (*A Shropshire Lad*, XL (1896)) in Chapters 6, 7 (‘Translation and Vocal Behaviour: Typography and Rhythm’) and 8 (‘Translation as Scansion: Capturing the Multiplicity of Rhythm’) respectively. These analyses originally appeared in *Palimpsestes*, 27 (‘Traduire le rythme’), 2014, 219–37, in an article entitled ‘Translation and the Expansion of the Rhythmic Sense’.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Caroline Drake for editing the text with such vigilant and constructive helpfulness, and to Linda Bree, Tim Mason, Lisa Sinclair and Bethany Thomas, for overseeing the production process with all the ready resourcefulness and efficiency that one could wish.

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.