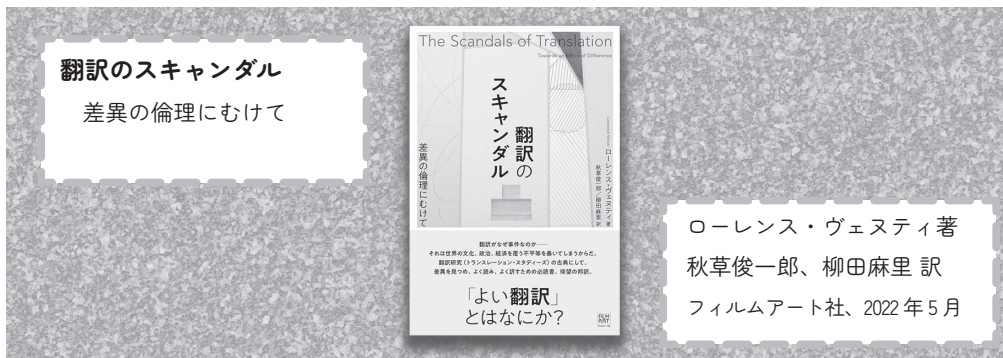


ジェシー・カークウッド



This is the Japanese translation of Lawrence Venuti's *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, translated by Shunichirō Akikusa and Mari Yanagita. Venuti is a translation theorist perhaps best known for his seminal work, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995), in which he sets out the distinction between 'domesticating' and 'foreignizing' translation that underlies much of his later work. A domesticating translation is one that seeks to repress difference by prioritizing readability, assimilating the translated text to the receiving culture while simultaneously effacing the work of the translator, who thereby becomes 'invisible'. Foreignizing translations, on the other hand, manifest the text's very foreignness through the adoption of strategies that seek to disrupt the reading process, highlighting the work's status as a translation, and decentre the reception of the work in the domestic culture.

This distinction also underlies much of the thinking set out in the present work, first published in English in 1998 and now translated into Japanese for the first time, where it is used as a framework for a broader interrogation of the entire ecology of translation and translation studies. In particular, Venuti sees the domesticating tendency in translation itself as symptomatic of a wider propensity to efface difference, thereby supporting the global hegemony of English and English-language culture while simultaneously obscuring and marginalizing the translation process itself. Addressing a series of areas in which this marginal status is evident – translation studies, authorship, copyright, the formation of cultural identity, the pedagogy of literature, philosophy, bestsellers, and the global marketing of translation – Venuti not only diagnoses the 'scandals' that exist via a series of insightful examples, but also suggests a series of concrete remedies and, more theoretically, sets out his vision of an 'ethics of difference' ( 差異の倫理, p. 164) that can decentre and displace hegemonic understandings of culture and language.

In the first chapter, Venuti tackles what he considers the lamentable state of translation studies. He criticizes the tendency to rely on linguistics-based approaches such as Paul Grice's notions of 'maxims' and 'implicature', as well as so-called scientific models such as Keith Harvey's compensation theory or Gideon Toury's value-free, descriptive approach. While acknowledging the insights that these empirical approaches can provide, Venuti argues that a focus on 'laws' or 'principles' discourages any attempt to study or practice experimentalist translation. Instead, he argues for a middle ground between such approaches and what he terms a 'cultural materialist orientation' (文化的唯物主義, p. 61). Underpinning his argument is the notion of the remainder, a term coined by Jacques Lecercle in *The Violence of Language* (1990) to mean the minor variables that constitute the untidy, creative part of a language in opposition to its more dominant, hegemonizing components. For Venuti, a foreignizing translation is effective at 'releasing' this remainder (よけいなものを解放する, p. 28), thereby disrupting the reader's experience by signalling the foreignness of the text and achieving a recognition of the translation as such.

In chapter 2, Venuti tackles the question of authorship. Translation, he claims, is an offense to authorship, because it upsets the notion of a monolithic authorial mind by introducing an unpredictable proliferation of texts in different languages and different translations. Taking the example of a literary hoax by Pierre Louys, who wrote a series of poems which he claimed to have translated from the work of a little-known Greek poet, Venuti shows how fully acknowledging the process of translation means recognizing that our interpretation of a text is always contingent on our particular cultural values.

Chapter 3 is devoted to an exposition of the ways in which copyright law works to efface or downplay the labour of the translator in favour of the author. Examining the history of copyright law, Venuti highlights the ways in which Romantic notions of original authorship have worked to promote the idea that a foreign text remains entirely the work of one individual even in translation, thus effacing the role played by the translator. He argues instead for a 'collective concept of authorship' (著者性の集合的概念, p. 129) that would put the translator on equal legal footing with the author and view the translation as largely autonomous from the foreign text.

In chapter 4, Venuti examines the role of translation in forming cultural identities. Rather than promoting an understanding of foreign literary traditions, the selection of texts for translation by publishers tends to affirm dominant cultural values in the domestic culture. Whether a translation is conservative or transgressive in relation to prevailing cultural norms depends not just on the strategies used by the translator but also on other factors in its reception, such as the cover design or marketing campaigns. Venuti considers the example of John Jones, a classical scholar who challenged the 'standard' English translations of Greek tragedies for their tendency to affirm the prevailing academic consensus as to their interpretation.

Turning to the translation of Japanese literature, Venuti also provides an insightful overview of the ways in which a select group of academic translators, such as Donald Keene and Edward

Seidensticker, oversaw the establishment of an extremely selective ‘canon’ of Japanese authors in English translation, primarily Junichirō Tanizaki, Yasunari Kawabata and Yukio Mishima. In opposition to the conservatism of Keene and his contemporaries, Venuti presents the example of Megan Backus’s 1993 translation of Yoshimoto Banana’s *Kitchen* as an example of the ways in which a foreignizing approach to translation can enact an ethics of difference, presenting an image of Japanese culture that challenges the reader’s assumptions rather than confirming them. Venuti sees this as a watershed in the translation of Japanese literature into English, helping to reform the distorted, orientaling canon that was established in the post-war era. It is interesting, over two decades later, to consider how *Kitchen* itself (together with the stratospheric success of Haruki Murakami) was instrumental in forming a new impression, in the United States and beyond, of Japanese literature as modern, cosmopolitan and quirky. This image arguably continues to dominate perceptions of Japanese literature abroad, as witnessed by the success of writers such as Kawakami Hiromi or the otherwise hard-to-explain mega-popularity of translated titles such as Toshikazu Kawaguchi’s *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* (2019) or Sōsuke Natsukawa’s *The Cat Who Saved Books* (2021).

Chapter 5 focuses on the teaching of literature in English-speaking countries, where a failure to acknowledge the translated status of the text creates an inevitable distortion of its understanding, as if the English version of the text were somehow definitive. Venuti follows Derrida in seeing this as a sort of ‘linguistic chauvinism’ (言語的愛国主義, p. 189) whereby English is portrayed as a ‘transparent vehicle of universal truth’ (普遍的な真実を伝える透明な媒介, p. 189). Instead, Venuti argues, students should see that ‘translation is not simple communication, but an appropriation of the foreign text to serve domestic purposes’ (たんなるコミュニケーションの道具ではなく、国内の用途に応じた外国語テキストの流用, p. 195). To achieve this, it is important to ‘teach the remainder’ (よけいのものを教える, p. 211) in other words to read translations *as translations*, studying the ways in which they form cultural identities as well as the domestic interests shaping their production.

In chapter 6, Venuti turns his attention to the translation of philosophy. Philosophical texts, he argues, are particularly vulnerable to the illusion of ‘transparency’. The quality of translations of philosophy are assessed merely in terms of how close they are to the original, meaning that, for students in English-speaking countries, a philosopher such as Wittgenstein is encountered solely in the form of English-language texts, with no acknowledgement of the ways in which those texts are inscribed with the cultural values and assumptions that the English language carries. This approach falls into the trap of assuming that language can be merely the vehicle for ideas, rather than simultaneously ‘destabilizing and reconstituting’ them:

言語は一哲学の文脈で複雑な概念を語る場合には特に一意見をそのまま表現できるという思いこみを捨てなければならない。言語をとおして伝える際には、意見は必ず不安定になったり再構造されたりするものだ。(p. 223)

Again, Venuti argues for a minoritizing approach to translation, one that embraces the differences born from translation and studies their effects on the domestic philosophical sphere.

From philosophy, Venuti turns his gaze to the bestseller, arguing in chapter 7 that prevailing attitudes among publishers are based on view of the domestic reader as self-referential or even narcissistic. As a result, translations are expected merely to reinforce, rather than challenge, their values. Venuti takes the example of Giovannino Guareschi's *Don Camillo*, a series of novels that achieved runaway-hit status in the 1950s because of their assimilation, in translation, to the anti-communist, humanist stance prevailing in the United States at the time. Bestselling translations of this kind, enabled by highly domesticating translations that erase difference and encourage immediate identification, function as a sort of mirror, so that readers simply 'looked into the translation to find themselves' (訳文の中に自分自身 [...] を求め, p. 295) rather than being confronted by anything that might challenge their values or thinking.

In the final chapter, Venuti considers the ways in which translation is implicated in global patterns of dominance and dependence, helping to prop up the processes of unequal cultural exchange caused by the domination of English. While translation now tends to serve corporate capital rather than specific nation states, it nonetheless continues to establish hierarchical and colonializing relationships. However, an approach to translation underpinned by an ethics of difference can reverse these patterns, challenging dominant forms by unleashing unpredictable effects. Venuti turns to Amos Tutuola and Gabriel Okara in Nigeria, and Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren in China, as examples of writer-translators who employ experimental forms of language in order to challenge and disrupt the hierarchies imposed by globalization.

As will be clear from this summary, Venuti's text is highly polemical, and there are occasions where the rhetorical force of his arguments seems to outweigh an attention to detail. For example, Venuti sees the American translator Norman Thomas di Giovanni as overly domesticating in his versions of Jorge Luis Borges' stories, criticizing him for 'enforcing a discursive regime' (談話風の型を押し付けて, p. 17) over the great writer's work, but in reality di Giovanni's translations were produced in close collaboration with Borges (a fluent English speaker) and received his full approval. Venuti claims that Borges unilaterally ended their collaboration, but this only seems to have happened because Borges moved away from Buenos Aires, where the two had been carrying out their work.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, many shifts have also taken place since the book appeared in English over twenty years ago. Venuti spends much of the section on translation studies lamenting the marginalization of approaches like his, but he is now arguably one of the most well-known figures in the entire field. Through fertile interactions with newly developed fields such as that of world literature, translation studies has cohered into an established discipline in its own right, with much more attention paid to the sorts of power relations he describes in this work and a greater integration of practice and theory.<sup>2</sup> And,

in the United Kingdom at least, translated fiction has skyrocketed in popularity, with sales increasing by an astonishing 96% between 2001 and 2015 – indeed, translated fiction now sells better than literary fiction written in English.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, many of the problems he diagnoses continue to exist, or have indeed been exacerbated by the continuing globalization of book markets.

So what does it mean, in 2022, for this work to be translated into Japanese? Firstly, it should be pointed out that it is the first full-length translation of a work by Venuti into the language. Whereas English-language readers are likely to have first encountered *The Translator's Invisibility*, in which Venuti sets out his foreignization/domestication paradigm at great length, the present work is more focused on the global inequalities that translation can both sustain and challenge. In a sense, this seems appropriate: translation into Japanese has historically leaned towards the foreignizing end of the spectrum and therefore been less affected by the issues diagnosed in *The Translator's Invisibility*, whereas the ethical issues set out in this work seem more broadly applicable to the translation of literature both into and out of Japanese.

At present, many of the ‘scandals’ outlined by Venuti continue to exist. As the translators point out in the afterword, Japan still sees a relatively low number of translations published every year, most of which are from English, and there is still a major imbalance when it comes to the publication of literary translations from languages other than English.<sup>4</sup> And, while Japanese literature is enjoying unprecedented popularity abroad, the way it is packaged and presented to foreign readers continues to rely on many of the exoticizing tropes criticized by Venuti – see, for example, the continuing trend for featuring anonymous Asian women on the covers of bestsellers, as epitomized by the recently revealed cover for Usami Rin’s *Idol, Burning*.

In other words, despite the twenty-four years that have passed since Venuti’s work was first published in English, this remains in many ways a timely translation. While the publishing and academic worlds have arguably grown more attuned to Venuti’s ‘ethics of difference’ in the intervening two decades, his thinking is still relevant if we are to understand the ways in which a misapprehension of translation’s function can have deleterious effects on our perceptions of culture and thought. The translation is excellent, and the text is accompanied by an afterword which provides clear summaries of some of Venuti’s key ideas for Japanese readers, as well as contextualizing the work in relation to the Japanese literary ecosystem.

---

---

notes

1. See Graham-Yooll, A. “Norman di Giovanni, the Master’s Translator”, *The Antioch Review*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Spring 2017), pp. 8-10. If anything, it appears di Giovanni was the one who ended up being silenced, as the translations he

produced with Borges were removed from circulation following a dispute with the writer's estate. Ironically, this proves the point made by Venuti later in his text – that the translator is never on an equal footing with the writer when it comes to disputes over copyright.

2. See, for example, the introduction by Malmkjær and Windle to *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies*, where they are able to claim that the field has 'now achieved full recognition as a discipline in its own right' Oxford University Press 2011, p1.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/06/translated-fiction-enjoys-sales-boom-as-uk-readers-flock-to-european-authors> (Accessed 30 Sep 2022)
4. See 白水社編集部 編『「その他の文学」の翻訳者』、白水社、2022.