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Translating for a mass readership

Call for papers

Traductologie de plein champ 2013

The masses are asses and - horror of horror! - they don't like cake. There's the proof, if proof were needed, that they are purveyors of poor taste. Such opinions have their champions in the world of translation and translation studies - scholars who use like arguments to pour scorn on products destined for the mass market. Posturing and pontificating conveniently disguise the absence of true reflection: it's easier to indulge in blustering rhetoric to win over the undecided, rather than taking the time to think through the issues. But issues there are, and they need to be addressed.

Translating for a mass readership is not a new phenomenon, but the problems it poses have become all the more acute during recent years as a result of two factors:

- as the translating profession becomes ever more professionalized, there is a move towards standardization;
- at the same time, there is an exponential increase in the means of producing and distributing translations for free, with the ever growing involvement of non-professional translators.

Even if it is true to say that the two trends point in opposite directions, there is one element that binds them together: the fact that more and more people are in contact with and use translations.

The first issue to be discussed concerns the act of translating itself - how does one's definition of the target audience influence translational choices? Should the reader necessarily pay a high price in terms of intellectual investment simply because a work has artistic or scientific pretensions? What attitude should be adopted towards religious (or even political) texts that are simultaneously addressed to the widest possible audience while also transmitting an esoteric message for the eyes of initiates only? How should the translator meet the needs of a large audience when translating a text which, at the outset, was written for a small number of readers - and vice-versa? The phenomenon of popularization is clearly one of the issues to be discussed, to which one can add the translation of best-sellers, romantic novels, blockbusters, songs,



administrative or legal texts, or documents written for and published on the Internet. Machine translation is also a key field to involve in discussion of these questions.

There are also social and political dimensions to be studied: what is or is not translated, where and when (and bearing in mind the different shapes that censorship can take). When translation aspires to become a mass phenomenon, does it have an emancipating role or does it in fact numb readers' minds, send them to sleep or even indoctrinate them? Is the market parameter a legitimate one in moral terms?

To summarise all the different questions evoked above: when translation is at work, what is propagated, what is modified - perhaps insidiously - and what objects of study can reasonably be identified? For our fifth edition of *traductologie de plein champ* we have chosen not only, as in the past, to bring together academics, researchers, students and professionals working in the field in the widest sense (publishers, for example), but, in order to do justice to the subject, also to organise three separate but coordinated events. They will take place on 2nd March 2013 at the University of Paris Diderot (with its professionally oriented MA programme on the language industries and specialised translation), on 14th September 2013 at the University of Geneva's Faculty of Translation and Interpreting (FTI) and on 7th December 2013 at ISTI - the *Institut supérieur de traducteurs et interprètes - Haute école de Bruxelles*. With the three different locations, it will be possible to differentiate between the various themes and issues addressed - each session will build on the discussions and conclusions of the previous one(s). In Paris the main orientation will be field-related, with professional approaches taking centre stage in Geneva, and the cultural elements given pride of place in Brussels.

The most representative professional organisations of the three host countries will be invited to the sessions concerning their country. The proceedings will be published by ISTI.

Please send an outline (500 words maximum) of your proposed paper in English or French by 31st December 2012 to:

- Nicolas Froeliger: nf@eila.univ-paris-diderot.fr;
- Christian Balliu: cballiu@heb.be;
- Lance Hewson: Lance.Hewson@unige.ch.

You will receive an answer by 20th January 2013. The programme for the three days will then be drawn up by the organisers.