JoSTrans
The Journal of Specialised Translation

www.jostrans.org · ISSN: 1740-367X

Epstein, B. (2014). The Voices of Suspense and their Translation in Thrillers. *The Journal of Specialised Translation, 22*, 214-215. https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2014.371

Cadera, Susanne M. and Pintarić, Anita Pavić (eds) (2014). *The Voices of Suspense and Their Translation in Thrillers*. Approaches to Translation Studies, vol. 39. Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi B. V., pp. 293, £ 57. ISBN 978-90-420-3822-6.

The Voices of Suspense and Their Translation in Thrillers, a new book on crime fiction, begins in a rather odd way. In their introduction, editors Susanne M. Cadera and Anita Pavić Pintarić say that this collection focuses on thrillers, and yet that "thriller" cannot be defined, because it is a genre with too many possible sub-genres (9). Instead, then, they assume that readers of their book will channel former US Justice Potter Stewart: they may not be able to define crime fiction, but they know it when they see it. And from that less-than-helpful starting point, the focus of the chapters in this book is on dialogue and how it creates suspense in thrillers, and how this in turn can be translated.

Cadera and Pavić Pintarić note that dialogue "is an important resource that enables the writer to shape the characters and the plot" (10) while suspense is "a feeling of uncertainty, anxiety and excitement that is created within the story" (12). This is a usefully narrow approach, but one still does wish for a clearer definition of the genre explored in this book.

The sixteen chapters in *The Voices of Suspense* cover speech, dialogue, character portrayal, point of view, plot, narrative structure, and semiotics, and they only explore European languages, with one foray into Arabic. The chapters are divided into three main sections: creating suspense; the translation of language variation and foreign language use; and transferring narrative structure, plot and semiotic elements in translations. The first two are interesting with regard to literary studies generally, but it is the third that is likely to stimulate the most thought for those in translation studies. In the following, I will consider one representative contribution from each section.

In the first section, eminent translation scholar Dirk Delabastita discusses how foreign languages are employed in two Late Victorian novels, George du Maurier's *Trilby* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Delabastita writes that creating suspense is quite complex and requires "[c]areful contextualisation" and he also points out that translation and multilingualism can be present in the source text, and thus are not merely issues for target texts (23). He offers a useful model of the factors involved in suspense, including "positive attitude towards protagonists", "specific expectations about what may plausibly happen", and "dramatic irony" (27). Delabastita's specific case study is intriguing; du Maurier's novel uses accents to heighten the anti-Semitic attitude, in order to show that "Svengali's linguistic, articulatory, and physical imperfections are inextricably linked with each other – and with his moral depravity- to produce an image of subhuman racial inferiority" (36). Meanwhile Stoker's

non-native-English-speaking character happens to speak perfect English because he is morally good, and the evil Dracula speaks perfect English because he "has honed his linguistic skills…as a strategy of camouflage and infiltration" (30).

An example of the discussion in the second section is Giuseppe De Bonis's article on multilingualism in Alfred Hitchcock's films. Fourteen out of Hitchcock's fifty-three thrillers include some element of multilingualism, and De Bonis writes that there are three main functions of this: "realistic rendering, conflict and confusion" (142); in other words, it sets the scene, heightens the tensions, and can create humour as well. De Bonis summarises the fourteen films and their employment of multilingualism – for instance, German, Italian, and French are, naturally, spoken in Switzerland in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and the terrorist character pretends not to speak English well to hide who he is. De Bonis also suggests some translational implications, but as with the other first eight chapters, does not analyse them in any great detail.

It is section three that finally gets to the practicalities of translation issues and it is thus this part of the book that is arguably most interesting for translation scholars. Karen Seago investigates ambiguity and misdirection in thrillers and how these rhetorical strategies are translated, or are not translated. Her case study in particular discusses two Agatha Christie works and their translations into German. Seago notes that repetition "builds on the processing capacity of the reader and it can be used to confuse or to aid recall" (217), but Christie's usage of repetition to misdirect readers is removed in German: "[t]he translator has tidied up and produced a fluent, clear and transparent passage but as a result has reduced the processing load required, working against the intentional construction of reader confusion in the English." (218) Where other scholars can build on such research is to develop strategies for how translators can avoid removing ambiguity or red herrings.

This collection of articles has some stimulating ideas, but it is clear that even more work is still needed on this subject. What is a thriller, really? What are the other elements of crime fiction, besides dialogue and suspense? How can translators translate them? *The Voices of Suspense* is just a start, albeit a worthy one.

B. J. Epstein
University of East Anglia
b.epstein@uea.ac.uk