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Gisèle Sapiro, ed., *Translatio: Le marché de la traduction en France à l'heure de la mondialisation*, Paris: CNRS éditions, 2008. 427 pp. Tables, graphs, and bibliography. 35.00 € (pb). ISBN 978-2-271-06729-6.

Review by Martyn Lyons, University of New South Wales.

Globalisation has brought about a huge acceleration in the pace of cross-cultural exchanges, as this study of the market in translations attests. European readers, for example, now have access to translated works in Chinese literature which were previously inaccessible. At the same time, as the French are well aware, globalization has a downside: it threatens us with cultural standardization, and the cultural hegemony of one language, namely, English. This study, produced by a team of literary sociologists at the CNRS between 2003 and 2007, provides plenty of ammunition for both sides of the picture. Its method is quantitative, and its inspiration is derived from Pierre Bourdieu.

Under the leadership of Gisèle Sapiro, the team analysed several databases of French publishing and bookselling, as well as UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, supplementing them with interviews with a handful of leading French book-trade practitioners. The outcome is a substantial description of recent trends in the translated book market, seen from a French viewpoint, over a twenty-year period since 1980. Their data concentrate on works in humanities and social sciences (*sciences humaines*) and general literature (*littérature*), which includes literary fiction, pulp fiction and children's books. On the whole the results do not suggest that French culture is heading for immediate extinction in an Anglo-dominated future. Although the global role of French may be in decline, it is descending a very gradual slope, while state investment policies have enabled it to resist *mondialisation* and retain second place on the ladder of translated languages.

The CNRS team's centre-periphery model of translated languages is already familiar to historians of the book, and it has become a common point of reference. Translatable languages are considered as either central (English, French, German), semi-peripheral (Spanish, Italian) or peripheral (Chinese, Japanese, Arabic). It may sound strange to classify as peripheral languages with millions of speakers, but this is simply a reflection of their share of the world translation market. Arabic may be the mother tongue of 200 million people and an official language in twenty-five countries, as well as being the master-language of Islam, but it accounts for less than 1 per cent of this market. Amongst the central languages, English stands supreme as the 'hyper-central' language of translation. Between 1980 and 2000, the total number of translated titles in the world increased by 50 per cent (p. 66). In the same period, translations from English into other languages doubled, and English now accounts for two-thirds of all translations into French (p. 69).

A central language like English or French, Sapiro explains, accounts by definition for at least 10 per cent of world market share. In the English case, the percentage is nearer 60. Far more works are translated *out* of a central language than are translated *into* it. Thus in the early 1990s, only 4 per cent of books produced in the U.S. consisted of translations, whereas in Greece or Portugal it was between 35 and 45 percent (p. 30). A central language attracts translations, and it carries considerable symbolic capital. For a Third World author to be translated into English or French amounts to a kind of canonization, which will bring in its wake further translations into other languages. French and English therefore both act as media for the dissemination of literary and scientific works across the globe.

Cross-cultural exchanges are accelerating and diversifying, but they remain 'asymmetrical'. On average, about 4,000 titles are translated from English into French every year, but fewer than 400 are translated annually from French into English (pp. 81-86). Translations from English completely dominate the market in the Nordic countries and now in Eastern Europe as well, but translations from French hold up well in Latin countries (p. 73). English is especially dominant in the field of translated pulp fiction or *polars* (crime fiction, thrillers, spy novels, *romans noirs*). In fact, about 90 per cent of all translated *polars* are taken from English originals (p. 288).

In other fields of the humanities as well as in literary (as opposed to 'commercial') fiction, the range of languages in the market is much more varied. Translations of Asian languages into French are on the rise—about 100 Japanese *manga* titles appear in French annually (p. 89). In philosophy, German is the master language, because of its prestige in this discipline, while the United Kingdom provides a large number of titles for translation in children's literature. In the field of detective fiction, the popularity of Manuel Vasquez Montalbán, creator of the anarchistic, food-loving, Catalan investigator Pepe Carvalho, has ensured the strong representation of Spanish fiction in French bookshops. It took the death of Franco, the vogue for Latin American magic realism, and the entry of Spain into the European Union in 1986 to create the conditions necessary for this improved Spanish-language market share. Borges, Goytisolo, Vargas Llosa, Paz and Fuentes are also much-translated into French, but Isabel Allende follows some way behind them.

The fate of Italian works in France follows a similar trajectory. Translations from Italian boomed in the 1980s, when Umberto Eco's *Le nom de la rose* sold 800,000 copies in France and eight million worldwide (p. 218). Eco's typescript was rejected by eminent French publishers including Seuil, Gallimard and at first by Grasset. But when Fasquelle heard his wife in stitches of laughter reading Eco, he decided to ignore a negative reader's report and publish the novel for Grasset regardless. So much for peer review. By the 1990s, the search for a successor to Eco had proved fruitless, but since the late 1990s, Italian novels have been well-represented in France once again, above all by Camilleri, Lucarelli and Ammaniti (p. 220). Sciascia, Calvino and Primo Levi are frequently translated, too.

A few small pioneering publishing houses have been prepared to take risks with works in relatively exotic languages. Translation is expensive, sales are often slow and profits meagre. But Christian Bourgois has specialized in publishing Chinese literature, and in the 1980s Anne Métailié took a plunge on Portuguese writers, including Saramago. Actes-Sud, established in 1978 by Belgian-born Hubert Nyssen, is another small-scale success story and has thrived on translating Delillo and Auster (who is perhaps even better-known in France than in his own country).

This diversity leads Sapiro to outline another model for the translation market, which she calls rather clumsily an oligopoly with a fringe (*oligopole à frange*). In other words, the market is dominated by a small group of countries surrounded by a varied and very dispersed periphery (p. 396). She is describing a world which recalls an old joke about a European heaven and hell, in which different nationalities assume different social functions. We can simplify today's publishing market by describing it as an ideal world in which the Germans provide the philosophy, the Dutch publish the art books, the French are responsible for social sciences, the Italians the detective fiction, the Americans the violent thrillers and the British publish the children's literature.

This book is a multi-authored study which includes chapters on specific genres and case-studies of France's relations with a few specific countries, namely, the Netherlands, Finland, Israel and the Arab world. There are a few important methodological weaknesses in this study. First, Harlequin's romantic fiction escapes the databases largely because it is not sold through conventional retail bookshops. This means that the figures tend to underestimate the weight of English titles. Second, translations are categorized in terms of their language rather than their country of origin. This means that the survey counts a novel originally written in English without necessarily distinguishing whether the author is for

instance English, American, Australian, African or Irish. Similarly, only three-quarters of works translated into French actually appeared in France, which implies that the publishing role of, for instance, Switzerland and Québec is obscured. Of course all the databases consulted were compiled from the publishers' own declarations, and they are vulnerable to error and exaggeration and to the reluctance of some small companies to pay the necessary fees to have all their output recorded. The approach is overwhelmingly statistical, and numerically-challenged readers may find it heavy going. In addition, the transnational history of the book still calls for more study of crucial cultural intermediaries, like literary agents and the translators themselves. Here they appear only fleetingly, often as occasional translators, sometimes as full-time professionals, in a highly feminized *métier*. Further research of a qualitative nature is needed to understand better this important sector of book production.

In spite of these shortcomings, the survey provides a very solid basis of information which is as up to date as we can expect. In continental Europe, the homogenising role of very large media conglomerates has been limited, and cultural diversity has made sure that a bland cultural euro-pudding has failed to materialise. The best-selling European authors continue to be published in various languages by a surprising mixture of small, large, highbrow and trade publishers. According to Miha Kovac's recent data from seven countries (presented to SHARP's Toronto conference in 2009), the best-selling fiction author in Europe in the last three years was neither American nor British, but the late Swedish writer Stieg Larsson. The European reading public remains a patchwork of cultures, and long may it remain so; European publishers still employ editors who read a variety of languages, and between 10 and 30 per cent of readers in the European Union continue to read books in foreign languages.

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