Reflexive Translation Studies

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Preface

This book presents a creative translation practice which I hope will inspire students, practitioners and scholars to experiment with the boundaries of translation beyond conventional acceptations of the term as a transfer of meaning from one language to another. My approach in this volume uses the movement of crossing at play in translation as a way of engaging with existing theory, while reflecting on that translating experience and unfolding in response a view of what translation is or could be about. Its premise is that translation theory – the way we perceive, describe or think about translation – is inevitably interwoven with practice. Here, theorising takes place during the translating process itself, in the act of undertaking a translation and attempting to articulate our experience of it, of facing a translation dilemma and reflecting on possible solutions.

In this framework, translation is conceived as a productive process which enables an experiential, tangible mode of thinking. Engaging critically with a piece of theory by translating it constitutes a creative gesture. It presupposes that the text chosen for translation demands further exploration and interrogation, and that recontextualising it through translation may bring to light new perspectives on translation. Ultimately, this book celebrates the critical and creative power of translation, its potential for questioning established concepts and creating new ones in the process. Its invitation to apprehend texts through translation extends beyond translation studies, to students and scholars across the humanities, as well as to practitioners and thinkers beyond academia.

Using translation as an instrument for critical reflection may prove constructive in a variety of ways. In the context of this volume, my focus is on translating theoretical texts from English into French and vice versa. However, I would like to invite readers to look beyond the confines of my practice and consider the range of possibilities that engaging with any given material – text, film, painting – through translation (transcreation, adaptation, ekphrasis) may instigate in their own discipline or field.