

Laš, Matej. 2019. Kritika umeleckého prekladu na Slovensku včera a dnes [eng.: Literary Translation Criticism in Slovakia Then and Now]. Banská Bystrica: Belianum.

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Until recently, there has been no comprehensive publication in Slovakia on translation criticism, despite the fact that this topic has been an area of professional interest for several scholars. Matej Laš's monograph with the distinctive title *Literary Translation Criticism in Slovakia Then and Now* tries to fill this gap. The study of translation criticism is not restricted to one level; the author deals with the topic on several levels: he proceeds from the history of the written form of the translation critique through the development of theories of translation criticism, while also looking at translation criticism as a part of translation studies and literary criticism, resulting in a juxtaposition of theory and practice.

The structure of the publication is conceptually well thought out. In the first chapter, Laš presents selected milestones of translation criticism and analyzes important historical periods when translation criticism began to appear in writing. He believes that written translation criticism has overtaken translation theory. Subsequently, he searches for the roots of the written form of translation criticism in the territory of modern-day Slovakia. He notes that over the decades, theorists have emphasized shortcomings in particular: they perceive translation criticism as absent, negative and unsystematic, often biased, without an overarching conclusion. The author describes these claims as parasitic memes that recur almost like clockwork. It would be beneficial for translation studies as a science to have them sufficiently examined and confirmed or refuted in future historiographical research.

In the second chapter, Matej Laš deals with the gradual formation of theories of translation criticism. The author reiterates that any literary translation critique is always part of literary criticism. However, there is no consensus on its definition; attempts to delineate it are characterized by discrepancy. The book's research into theory is based on now-classic Slovak works by Ferenčík (1982) and Popovič (1975) and studies by Šabík (1968), Bagin (1981), Števček (1981), Plutko (1981), Hochel (2001) and Koška (2002), but also on more recent studies by Baková (2007), Franek (2011), Ďurčová (2011) and Rakšányiová (2012). The author also considers the place of translation criticism as a scholarly discipline. He believes that translation criticism, as part of literary criticism or, originally, literary reflections and essays, was conditioned by the emergence of translation studies, of which it is currently a subdiscipline. He sees translation criticism as an area of research, as a borderline category between translation studies and literary science (the Anglo-American tradition prefers the designation of literary criticism), as a heterogeneous chain of loosely connected

paradigms manifesting the attributes of an interdiscipline. The principle of symbiosis applies here – translation criticism, literary science and translation studies can enrich each other. The author also focuses his thoughts on the diversity of functions of translation criticism, its recipient and sender. In terms of the peculiarities of literary translation criticism, he deals with ideology in literary translation and ethics, which he considers to be a topical, even urgent area of research. From the opinions of the cited experts, it follows that interpretation is a key feature of literary translation criticism.

The third chapter synthesizes current thought on translation criticism around the world. Laš differentiates theory of translation criticism into Western and Eastern, as these traditions have significantly different roots, but at the same time he adds that under the influence of globalization, these differences are partially blurred and translation studies is being enriched in the footsteps of post-positivism. From Western translation studies, the comprehensive models by Reiss (2000), House (2013), Hewson (2011) and Berman (2011) are brought to the fore, as well as reflections on the individual components of translation criticism in the work of Toury (1995), Venuti (2008), and Meschonnic (2010). From Eastern translation studies, the subject of analysis is mainly Russian translation studies (Kostikova 2002; Topper 2000; Tulenev 2006), rooted in formalism. The aim of these analytical reflections is to emphasize the universals that accompany discussions on translation criticism in every tradition of translation studies.

To compare theory and practice, Matej Laš proposes his own "ideal" theoretical model based on the universals of translation criticism and on the description of translation criticism as a communicational phenomenon. He emphasizes that each translation critique needs its own ad-hoc model; the proposed multilevel and multicomponent model can then be considered as potential. The fourth chapter is an empirical study of current forms of translation criticism in selected Slovak literary periodicals – *Revue svetovej literatúry*, *Romboid*, *Slovenské pohľady*, *Kritika prekladu* – from Slovakia's independence in 1993 to 2017. Laš tries to answer nine research questions. The subject of the research are articles which, on the basis of the established methodology, can be considered comparative or non-comparative critiques of prose or poetry translations. The corpus (out of 1,338 reviews and critiques 178 were considered translation critiques in a strict sense) is evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative results show that translation critiques occur sporadically rather than regularly in literature-oriented journals. Nevertheless, translation criticism exhibits an increasing trend as a genre. The qualitative research confirms that literary translation criticism is a broad-spectrum and difficult-to-define phenomenon. The structure and form of critiques of poetry and prose translations differ greatly, as do, to a lesser extent, comparative and non-comparative translation critiques. The research shows that the methodology of poetry translation criticism is more elaborate, focusing especially on the translator's personality and individual poetics. It becomes

apparent that even less frequent components of translation criticism can be to its benefit.

Matej Laš's publication is a significant addition to contemporary thought on translation criticism in Slovakia. Its main contribution is its detailed analysis of the current state of literary translation criticism in Slovakia, comparison with the proposed "comprehensive" model and recommendation of necessary changes. The presented model of literary translation criticism aims to stimulate discussion about substantiated translation criticism and its (in)definability. It encourages the descriptive study of the phenomenon of translation criticism. The monograph therefore leaves us with no choice but to reconsider the common dogma of the non-existence of literary translation criticism in Slovakia.