

Hanna, Sameh. (2016) *Bourdieu in Translation Studies: The Socio-cultural Dynamics of Shakespeare Translation in Egypt*. London & New York: Routledge, 220pp. ISBN 978-1-138-80362-6 (hbk) £110.00. ISBN 978-1-315-75359-1 (ebk) £39.99

Recent research in translation and intercultural studies (Baker 2014) has restated and elaborated an obvious but under-recognised claim: that translation, in its interlingual and intra-lingual guises, is and always has been a social phenomenon. However, understanding and articulating the implications of this deceptively simple insight have never been straightforward. In spite of the growing body of publications on sociology and translation (Wolf and Fukari (eds) 2007; Diaz-Fouces and Monzo (eds) 2010; Tyulenev 2012; Angelelli (ed) 2014), there is a need for accessible, soundly researched publications in this field.

The title under review makes a significant contribution towards this need. Sameh Hanna's book offers a clearly explained Bourdieusian approach to the social dynamics surrounding the translation, performance and publication of Shakespeare's tragedies in Egypt. Key concepts of 'capital', 'field' and 'habitus', which are central to Bourdieu's social theory, are explained with examples. Closely related concepts of 'autonomy/heteronymy', 'doxa', 'distinction' and 'ageing' are added to this vocabulary.

As the term 'social dynamics' in the subtitle of the book implies, the sociology of translation does not merely describe a rigidly structured social system; it engages actively with a dynamically changing 'social space' in which translators, researchers and others involved in the process all participate. While most theories agree on this point, the topic is very complex, and different theories tend to use different specialist terminology. In spite of such differences, for example, between the theories of Bourdieu, Latour and Luhmann, which are sufficiently familiar in translation-studies theory to be mentioned in relevant encyclopaedia entries (Inghilleri 2011), there is considerable overlap between these approaches.

Hanna's book, which comprises seven chapters, is characterised by its clear focus on the Bourdieusian approach to translation studies. In this review, I have concentrated on Chapter 2 which addresses the central, Bourdieusian theoretical framework and will be of particular interest to new research students and readers of *New Voices*. While the other chapters focus on the translation of Shakespeare in Egypt, they are very accessible to non-experts and, in some cases,

provide brilliant examples of Bourdieusian theory in practice. This is especially true of Chapter 5, which deals with retranslation.

Bourdieu's concept of *field* is distinct from the conventional concepts of 'structure' and 'system' used by other sociologists and translation theorists (Hanna refers specifically to Luhmann, Even-Zohar and Hermans). Unlike the concept of 'system', Bourdieu's 'field' is characterised by struggles between real agents with real stakes. Hanna's discussion of the 'field of cultural production' begins with the quotation:

we know that in every field we shall find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked for each time, between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition. (Bourdieu 1993: 72)

This quotation leads to the heart of Hanna's discussion of the field of drama translation in which there is a struggle between those who claim that the drama translator should serve only the intentions of the source playwright and the source text and those who believe that especially drama translated for stage, is conditioned by socio-political and economic factors which the translator must address (p.22). In the field of drama translation, translators are therefore not neutral agents; they necessarily adopt a position relative to existing, dynamically evolving tensions and struggles within the field.

Hanna's discussion of *habitus* engages directly with Bourdieu's most famous definition of the term. Bourdieu sought to distance his theory from two opposing, exclusivist views of human agency: "one posits it as free-floating subjectivity that is totally dissociated from social conditioning, and the other conceives it as a mechanical extension of social structures..." (p.43). Bourdieu's response is to define the *habitus* as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, *structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures*" (Bourdieu 1990: 53). The emphasis here is added by Hanna, who draws from this definition three salient features. First, the *habitus* is 'structured', being acquired and shaped through experiences such as socialisation and education. Second, the *habitus* has a 'structuring' function in that it locates or orientates the practices of the individual within the social space; and third, and according to Hanna most important, the *habitus* "generates 'dispositions' or strategies for action rather than rules for

implementation” (p.43). This last distinction is important because the *habitus* of an individual agent “does not predispose him/her to operate in accordance with explicit social norms, because the schemes of this habitus function “below the level of consciousness and language” (ibid). The *habitus* is a dialectical rather than a hierarchical relationship, unstable and dynamic rather than rigid, rule-bound or deterministic.

With specific reference to translation and translators, Hanna (pp.38-42) gives a detailed account of Bourdieu’s analysis of the different forms of *capital*. For example, cultural capital is broken down into *embodied* capital, *objectified* capital and *institutionalised* capital. “Embodied cultural capital is concentrated in the range of knowledge, skills, cultural, artistic and political preferences which the individual agent possesses ...” (p.38) Alongside her/his knowledge of the world and general skills, a translator’s knowledge of at least two languages constitutes a specific embodied capital. “The value of this investment is determined by the convertibility of cultural capital to economic or social capital” (ibid). Objectified capital exists in the form of material objects and media, and once again, “the value, symbolic and economic of the reference books, dictionaries and other translation tools that a translator possesses is conditioned by how he or she invests in them and transforms them into assets that help maximise his or her symbolic and economic profit in the field of translation” (ibid). Institutionalised cultural capital takes the form of academic degrees, titles or awards certified by an educational or cultural institution.

This analysis leads Hanna into an example from the case study. The notion of institutionalized cultural capital and its role in positioning agents within cultural fields explains “the tendency of a group of Shakespeare translators in Egypt to flag their certified cultural competence paratextually. The translators’ academic titles are mentioned on the front cover. The back cover, and the preface is used to highlight the distinctive position enjoyed by these translators” (p.39).

Bourdieu’s concept of *doxa* is prominent in Hanna’s analysis. The *doxic* beliefs and practice of a social agent operate below the level of consciousness. However, as Hanna explains,

when agents become conscious of *doxa*, these implicit and taken-for-granted beliefs enter the realm of language and become the object of two opposite discourses: *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy*. Orthodoxy is the discourse created by the agents occupying the dominant position in the field, who deploy what Bourdieu terms ‘conservation strategies’ in order to

maintain the status quo of that field and their position in it (...) The discourse of heterodoxy is usually deployed by newcomers or already existing members occupying dominated positions in the field; these tend to use ‘subversion strategies’ in order to challenge the existing doxa and disrupt its dominant position in the field (...) (p.46).

This explanation is supported by a diagram of the two realms of ‘doxa’ and ‘opinion’, leading to an analysis of the historically shifting line of demarcation between the doxic and the discursive within the field of drama translation and the positioning of drama translators either side of this line.

Another important relationship identified through Bourdieu’s analysis of the social dynamic is that of *autonomy* versus *heteronomy* which results from the *homologies* between fields of cultural production, including the field of theatre translation, and related fields such as the political and the economic. Because theatre productions all depend to some extent on economic factors, a distinction can be made between relatively ‘autonomous’, for example ‘avant-garde theatre’, in which aesthetic considerations outweigh commercial considerations, and ‘bourgeois theatre’, in which considerations of economic profitability force theatre companies into “extremely prudent cultural strategies which take no risks and create none for their audiences” (p.53, quoting Bourdieu).

Chapter 3 analyses the genesis of the field of drama translation in Egypt with particular reference to the earliest Arabic version of *Hamlet* translated for stage in 1901 by Ṭanyūs ‘Abdu. This first phase in the creation of a field is characterised by the definition of boundaries, especially through a struggle between intellectuals over different visions, divisions and namings which distinguish the members of this field from others in adjacent or remote fields and thus establish its legitimacy.

Chapter 4 takes this story further considering aspects of the translator’s agency and some new translation products in what might be described as the second generation of drama translators in the second decade of the twentieth century. In particular, this chapter discusses the ‘de-commercialisation’ of the Arabic Shakespeare, for example, with reference to Khalīl Muṭrān’s translation of *Othello*, which was staged and then published in 1912. The rise of ‘serious theatre’

at this time represented a significant shift in the practices and positioning of drama translators in Egypt.

For readers interested in ‘retranslation’, Chapter 5 will be of special interest. Here, Hanna draws on two further Bourdieusian concepts ‘distinction’ and ‘social ageing’. Social ageing is the process whereby any product within the cultural field is conditioned “by the ongoing battle between the consecrated and the non-consecrated, the established and the newcomers, the avant-garde and the outmoded.” (p.62) The conflict in the cultural field is therefore not only over symbolic capital (recognition, consecration) or economic capital (financial profit), it is also a battle over time in which newcomers try to “push back into the past” the consecrated work of their predecessors so that it seems ‘dated’ by comparison with the new (p.63). So, while new cultural producers try to achieve ‘distinction’ for their products, through strategies of ‘assimilation and dissimulation’, this process is constrained by the requirement for a minimum level of compliance with the conventions which constitute the structure of the field: “this minimum compliance is the fee that new producers pay in order to gain and maintain membership of the field” (p.139). By way of example, Hanna describes the *habitus* of the translator Muṭrān, who was educated in the tradition of classical Arabic and French (p.117) but also associated with language reform and innovative poetry (p.138). On the basis of this embodied cultural capital (p.145), Muṭrān’s translations assert the autonomy of theatre translations from the influence of popular, commercial considerations. By contrast, the translators Enani, ‘Awad and Musa represent a different generation. They were educated to PhD level in English at Cairo University. Their work was distinguished from that of their predecessors, including Muṭrān, based on their institutionalised cultural capital (ibid).

Chapter 6 discusses the distinction between *fushḥa* (the classical language associated with the Koran and religious conservatism) and ‘*ammiyya*’ (the vernacular language associated with popular comedy and lower social classes). The more modern ‘iconoclastic’ translators were able to use this distinctiveness between language varieties to articulate their own positioning.

Hanna concludes *Bourdieu in Translation Studies* with a restatement of three underlying principles at the centre of Bourdieu’s theory: ‘relational methodology’, ‘historicising sociology’ and ‘self-reflexiveness’. Throughout the book, Hanna makes it clear that Bourdieusian sociology is to be used as a ‘conceptual tool’ for analysing the social dynamics surrounding the chosen

translation situation. However, it becomes evident after reading a few pages that this is not the kind of tool which one simply picks up and puts down again. To apply Bourdieusian theory in translation studies means engaging with the theory at every turn. The data, the tool and the user are all subtly changed by this experience, but perhaps more importantly, so is the reader.

In a brief interview with the author earlier this year in Leeds, I asked about Sameh Hanna's future research projects. He is currently investigating Arabic translations of the Bible. As an enthusiastic reader of *Bourdieu in Translation Studies*, I am already impatient for this author's next publication, which I hope will also be reviewed in *New Voices*.

David Charlston

Honorary Research Fellow, Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies

University of Manchester, UK

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