

Foreword

Paratext has been one of the buzzwords in Translation Studies during the last two decennia, inspiring a wealth of research and publications and informing studies on a number of topics such as translator microhistories and discussions on visibility. The present collection is a welcome contribution to the field, and not only because of the wide variety of uses that the concept of paratext has been put to, the various kinds of data and the resulting richness of research results. There are (at least) two other, more particular benefits for the readers of the volume: within Translation Studies (TS), the collection offers a particular geographic and linguistic angle to research on paratexts; and for the larger audience, the book showcases the contribution of Translation Studies to fields such as literary, cultural and mediation studies as well as the interconnectedness of these academic fields.

Within TS, translation-specific phenomena need and merit to be connected to each other on a wider geographical and linguistic scale. Regions that have sometimes been called “smaller literatures” (not necessarily because of their size but because of their relatively invisible presence in target cultures) and languages that have been named “less translated/distributed languages” give us new perspectives on cultural exchanges, and balance and challenge our ways of thinking about translational mediation. Within a smaller language area, the question of retranslation may turn into a puzzle of *non*-rettranslation (Svahn, in this collection), highlighting different ways of canonization from larger language areas. The size of the language area may also be decisive as an enabling factor in producing representative datasets, such as the set of reviews of post-Soviet Russian novels in the Swedish newspaper press, allowing width and depth of analysis in the study of receiver-centered paratexts (Podlevskikh Carlström). In the Nordic countries, social surroundings also come to play in

the creation of paratexts, as well as the actual text: societal changes are reflected in paratextual framing (Axelsson).

Such explorations also underline the second major contribution of this volume, the contribution that TS can make in other areas of mediation and transfer studies. These concern newspaper practices (such as reviews), appropriation, and/or adaptation of texts in their institutional or ideological contexts (Bible paratexts as paratextual retranslation; Pleijel). The contributions also very much address questions of world literature, marketing, and national signifiers: the volume includes a chapter examining book covers, their evolution and connotations, and publishing house strategies in creating expectations and audiences (Rüegg). This is yet another field of enquiry that spreads outwards from Translation Studies, this time into the realm of visual design, its uses in marketing, and its interpretations.

The study of paratexts as set against their geographical locations thus provides us with a useful litmus test for checking findings and data with results from different cultural and linguistic environments and between uneven linguistic exchanges. Translation—like other types of mediation—crosses borders, not just on the level of the text but on the level of patterns, practices, and translation thinking. These patterns and thinking partly reside and lay available for exploration in translational paratexts. It remains to be explored how much these patterns and thinking change in different environments: an endeavour that is at the heart of this book. The volume is a timely contribution and will make its mark in cross-pollinating academic work within the field of paratext study.

This book is not Nordic noir. It is Northern Lights!