Youdale, Roy (2020). *Using Computers in the Translation of Literary Style: Challenges and Opportunities*. New York (USA) & London (UK): Routledge, pp. 242+xv, £ 120 (Hardback) / £ 40.49 (eBook). ISBN 978 0367141233.

Automation is accelerating, and like in many other fields, the interaction between humans and computers is a contentious topic in translation academia and industry. The use of translation memory software and the gradual implementation of machine translation are established procedures in most commercial translation environments, but the literary translation sector remains largely resistant to technological innovations. Youdale's book argues that literary translators could benefit from engaging with digital developments beyond word processing programmes, particularly regarding corpus-linguistic tools and the visualisations they provide. Youdale focuses on the translation of style, which is taken to refer to the "distinctive linguistic characteristics of a particular text, which comprise both conscious and unconscious elements of language use" (3). The suggestion that style may operate largely unconsciously is crucial here, as it provides the rationale for subjecting texts to software applications that can identify and numerically describe textual patterns.

The book is methodological in purpose, as it mainly argues for the usefulness of 'close and distant reading' (CDR), a dynamic mixed methods approach that complements attentive reading with computational scrutiny. While it is concerned with computing, no technical knowledge is required to read the book – and it should be stated that little technological knowledge will be gained by reading it. The author makes use of tools such as CATMA and Sketch Engine, which are readily available and easy to use. The numerical operations illustrated in the book – which include the generation of keyword, frequency, and n-gram lists – are simple and straightforward. It is acknowledged that more complex statistical methods have been devised in the field of stylometry, and in the broader area of digital humanities, but the purpose of the book is not to astonish readers with results they cannot reproduce, but to assist them in broadening their field of vision regarding the process of literary translation.

By means of illustration, Youdale documents his own translation of Benedetti's (1965) novel *Gracias por el fuego,* and this case study occupies the bulk of the book. The overall introduction is followed by a first chapter sketching the relation between technology and literary translation. The second chapter provides ways of analysing stylistic features of a given source text, in this case Benedetti's novel. The third chapter, which is largely theoretical in purview, discusses the possibility of generating equivalence of stylistic effect and reflects on foreignising translation strategies. In the fourth chapter, CDR is exemplified with reference to issues such as the preservation of culture-specific items and multilingualism in the source text. The following chapter refines the approach in relation to more

inconspicuous stylistic factors, such as sentence length and punctuation. The sixth and seventh chapter are reflective, as they provide insight into translation choices already made: how to recognise, and perhaps reconsider, the stylistic choices one makes as a translator? The final chapter provides a helpful retrospective overview of the book's contents, and convincingly argues that the book should be useful for scholars, practitioners, and students alike.

This broad utility may be the book's strongest feature, along with the fact that it is impeccably written. Youdale is patient and charitable to the reader, the work is at every point accessible, and most examples are sound and convincing, if at times drawn out and repetitive. The book is unpretentious and honest about its limitations. Although passion for the subject sometimes makes this monograph read like a personal journey, its scholarly value is incontestable. Highlights include the many charts and tables that truly help the reader understand the methodology, the excellently embedded quotes from other scholars in the field, and the many insights in the genesis of particular translation choices. It is today customary to market books by means of a general title that may inflate readerly expectations. This is no different for *Using Computers in the Translation of Literary Style*. The book provides a quite limited initiation in a much larger, and ultimately very complex domain. Yet it does so skilfully and conscientiously. Youdale illustrates how literary translators can engage with corpus tools in order to enhance their craft, and in doing so makes a valuable contribution to the reconciliation of human and machine in the realm of textual production.

References

- **Benedetti, Mario** (1965). *Gracias por el fuego*. Montevideo: Alfa.

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