Meta
Journal des traducteurs
Translators' Journal

META

EVANS, Jonathan (2016): *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 176 p.

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Volume 64, Number 1, April 2019

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1065344ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1065344ar

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Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (print)
1492-1421 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this review

Li, M. (2019). Review of [EVANS, Jonathan (2016): *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 176 p.] *Meta*, *64*(1), 301–304. https://doi.org/10.7202/1065344ar

EVANS, Jonathan (2016): *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 176 p.

According to Andrew Chesterman, "Translator Studies covers research which focuses primarily and explicitly on the agents involved in translation, for instance on their activities or attitudes, their interaction with their social and technical environment, or their history and influence" (Chesterman 2009: 20). For a couple of decades, studies on this subfield of translation studies have flourished, with interdisciplinary perspectives ranging from literary criticism, sociology to psychology and so forth. However, a scarcely charted territory is the translation practice of writer-translators. As a result of their dual status, there tends to be no clear-cut demarcation between the translation and writing products of writer-translators. Jonathan Evans' *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality* sits on the fuzzy boundary of translation studies, incorporating insights from comparative literature. It delves into the literary practices of writer-translators and sheds new light on the writer-translator duality.

Through a close reading, Evans finds that Davis' works challenge the separation between writing and translation, and thus forge "a reverse of the usual hierarchy of writing as primary and translation as secondary" (p. 3). Derived from his doctoral dissertation, the book consists of seven chapters with discrete intertextual subthemes, all aimed at answering the following research questions: how do Davis' translational and authorial writings interact with each other? how problematic is the place of a writer-translator's œuvre? Chapter 1 gives an outline of the whole monograph and is followed by four chapters that explore Davis' interaction with four authors, Blanchot, Leiris, Proust, and Flaubert, both in her writing and her translations. Davis' works bear affinity with Blanchot, construct dialogues with Leiris, rewrite Proust, and share authority with Flaubert. The key words in the title of each chapter clearly indicate the core findings. The sixth chapter deals with Davis' short story on Marie Curie, which, though constructed from translated elements, is more of a parody. The last chapter offers a comprehensive appraisal of Davis' short stories, examining techniques such as collage, quotation, pastiche, and other means of grafting material from other authors, which further blur the boundary between translation and writing.

Evans' ground-breaking contribution results from a shift in research perspective. He was dissatisfied with previous researchers' assumption of the unidirectional influence of writing on translation, as is the case with Marjorie Perloff and Beverly Haviland, which he considers "too simple an idea to describe the relationship between Davis' work and her translations" (p. 5). Thus, Evans explores the reciprocal relationship between Davis' translation and writing. Applying research methods from both descriptive translation studies and comparative literature, Evans closely examines selected texts from Davis' œuvre and concludes that, although translation has indeed shaped Davis' fiction, overall her writing and translations maintain a textual dialogue marked by reciprocity; this is also the case between her writing and that of other authors. Seminal works such as George Steiner's *After Babel* (1975) and Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) do not explore the relationship between a writer-translator's translational and authorial works. Evans' research thus counterbalances the tendency in translation studies to view translators as "mono-professional" (Pym 1998: 161).

The concept of œuvre is central in this book. It underlies all essential discussions and links all of Evans' key discoveries together, which range from intricate authorship and dialogic relationships to intertextual dynamics like graft, collage, and montage. For Foucault (1969/1998: 207, 213), an œuvre posits a unity across an author's different texts. It is an expectation of the reader rather than a demonstrable textual quality: readers expect a certain coherence and uniformity across an author's body of work. Readers will not accept just any text as part of an œuvre: there must be some sort of connection and uniformity with the other texts. However, Foucault points out that unity is an illusion: the concept of *author* is what makes it possible to overcome the contradictions that may be found in a series of texts… The author is not, therefore, equivalent to the writer, but rather a constructor of the text (p. 9). Evans' assessment of Davis' repertoire provides an appropriate application of this theoretical proposition. Because of their dual status, as both original and derivative, translations occupy a problematic place in a writer-translator's œuvre. The place that translations find in an œuvre depends on how they are perceived in relation to the other works by the writer-translator (p. 10). Evans draws out three main trends regarding the place of translation in an author's œuvre: 1) translations have no relationship to the other texts; 2) translations influence the writer-translator's writing; or 3) translations form a dialogue with the writer-translator's other texts. Connection and uniformity in Davis' œuvre are addressed from the second chapter onwards, taking into consideration not only her translations of the classics, but also her at-first-glance peculiar, early translation-for-hire that contradicts her established authorial persona.

In Chapter 2, Evans teases out Davis' affinity with Maurice Blanchot from her rendering of his

fiction and from her own fiction. Evans begins with a critical reflection on Davis' translation of Blanchot's *L'Arrêt de mort*,[1] which turns out to violate Davis' self-proclaimed "extreme fidelity" (p. 26). Linguistic analysis reveals minor changes at the syntactic level; Blanchot's characteristic ambiguity and formality, however, are reproduced by mimicking diction, out of respect for the form and the narrative. Further evidence of this affinity between Davis and Blanchot is provided by exploring the narratological similarity between Davis' short story *Story*[2] and Blanchot's *La Folie du jour*,[3] both of which question the concept of narrative and subvert conventional, Aristotelian narrative poetics. Blanchot's influence on Davis as a writer is also highlighted, a line of inquiry not explored by previous researchers. It brings to mind Susan Bassnett's remark regarding writer-translators: "Frequently writers translate other people's works because those are the works they would have written themselves had they not already been created by someone else" (Bassnett 2006: 175). Viewing the whole constellation of Davis' œuvre, it is appropriate to qualify the affinity between Davis and Blanchot as an "authorial response" (p. 32). However, at the end of this chapter, Evans seems to imply that Blanchot's influence on Davis is inconsistent, stating that there is also "a sort of rejection of his influence in her writing" (p. 44). This additional claim is made without further elaboration.

Evans' most significant contribution to translation theory in this book is the idea of a "dialogic relationship" (p. 15) between translation and writing, which is mainly elaborated in Chapter 3, "Leiris and Dialogue." This idea is an enrichment of the idea first proposed by Bassnett (2006), according to which translation can establish a dialogue between the translator's authorial œuvre and that of the translated author. Not content with only viewing translations as translational, Evans argues that this form of textual production belongs to a larger poetic project. Minute linguistic comparison, though unfavoured in recent translation studies, is employed by Evans in the first section to show how Davis' works and Michel Leiris' autobiographies enter into a dialogue. Davis' uniquely radical, norm-breaking, translational strategies – such as non-translation of the French title, translation of French words using English cognates to mimic the "sound" of the source text – highlights a recurrent theme in translation studies: the non-equivalence problem. Davis' subversion of translational norms is ascribed to her elevated status as an author in the literary world and to the prestige of the surrealist poet Leiris. Although Evans provides solid evidence in other chapters, namely in the form of Davis' own claims, this particular line of reasoning appears more subjectively conjectural. In the second section, Evans himself admits that the existence of a trilateral dialogic relationship among Davis' own fictional works, her translation of Leiris, and Leiris' works is tenuous. Davis' emulation of Leiris' style in her writings is presented as a form of "dialogic relationship." However, Evans ends this chapter with a slightly simplistic explanation, with Leiris being considered an inspiration and precursor despite the claim of a productive dialogue that serves as a framework for his argument. To achieve what Evans conceives of in the introductory chapter, namely that "translations are given a status commensurate with" (p. 16) an author's other œuvre, more rigorous theoretical argumentation would have been expected in this chapter.

Davis' reputation as a writer's writer finds its best demonstration in Chapter 4, "Proust and Rewriting." Incorporating both Lefevere's and Moraru's concepts of rewriting, Evans identifies Davis' two ways of rewriting Proust. The first is her original novel *The End of the Story*,[4] which embodies authorial rewriting, translation in a metaphorical sense. The second is her retranslation of the first volume of Proust's À *la recherche du temps perdu*,[5] which constitutes translational rewriting. Evans' analysis of Davis' *The End of the Story* reveals numerous references to Proust, such as explicit allusions as well as similarities in themes and structure, which are manifestations of Davis' outspoken claim to approaching things the same way as Proust. As for her translation of *Du côté de chez Swann*,[6] an elaborate, comparative reading with the already highly circulated and canonical version by Scott Moncrieff shows that Davis has adopted a more literal translation strategy, especially in her lexical choices. This translation strategy is attributed to Davis' self-conscious approach, which aligns with her own aesthetics in story writing: "that of exactness in expression" (p. 87). Evans' inference is well-grounded, which is true for most case studies in the book, as Davis herself provides sufficient evidence in her paratexts. The same translation strategy is shown to have been used in Davis' retranslation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*,[7] through nuanced analysis of several excerpts in Chapter 5. Evans argues that translation was also used in the construction of her authorial story *Ten Stories from Flaubert*,[8] which destabilizes the boundary between translation and writing, writer and translator. Dialogic rewriting is used by Evans to describe the intertextual relationship that Davis' writing and translations share with both Proust's and Flaubert's novels. This speaks to the book's premise, namely that translation is a form of creativity.

The last two chapters differ from previous ones, in which Davis' authorship and translatorship are examined in light of the intertextual connection existing between her works and that of specific authors. Indeed, they focus on particular techniques of textual production, such as parody, collage, and pastiche. These techniques mirror translation in their re-contextualization of material from another source, further blurring the boundary between translation and original writing. Outside sources are discernible, namely, in Davis' original story *Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman*,[9] as Davis repurposes her own translation of Giroud's biography of Marie Curie. The stories discussed in this chapter appear scattered and unrelated at first glance, but Evans exposes a common thread: double coding material from another source. In doing so, Evans proposes a holistic perspective on Davis' writing. Given the fuzzy boundary between writing and translation, writer and translator, which characterizes Davis both as a writer and as a translator, Evans also draws an analogy between her textual production and postmodern art, though he himself does not explicitly adopt a postmodern lens.

Throughout this book, the most innovative concept is that of *graft* (p. 9), which is used in the introductory chapter as a metaphor for the place of translation within an author's œuvre. According to Evans, if there is a connection between a writer's own texts and their translations, then these translations can be viewed as an extension, through another writer's texts, of that writer's œuvre. Translation occupies a "liminal position of belonging" (p. 9); it is part of a writer's textual production, but, at the same time, it also displays elements that are potentially radically different from what is found in the author's other texts: "Like a graft, they form part of the work but at the same time they are also recognizably distinct" (p. 9). Evans' concept of *graft* shares some similarities with that of Derrida. While Derrida explains how texts are woven together from multiple discourses, which erases the possibility of a single reading of a text, Evans' *graft* highlights how translation occupies a double position, simultaneously within and outside of an author's œuvre. However, Derrida's *graft* is confined to the level of authorship and takes place within a text. For Evans, the translated texts themselves are considered grafts within the larger system of an author's works and they influence the reception of other texts by that author. Evans' *graft* can thus be viewed as an expansion of Derrida's concept. Considering Davis' translational writing as a graft is an insightful proposition. The book's theoretical contribution would have been strengthened if it had been developed into a systematic translation theory, which could have encompassed the distinct subthemes of the different chapters.

In spite of all the positive contributions made by Evans, this book is not flawless. The introductory and concluding sections of each chapter are meant to echo one another, but instead contain significant repetition, leading to redundancy. Moreover, it is somewhat far-fetched to conclude, in Chapter 7, that translation and writing overlap simply because translation is a theme in both *Foucault and Pencil*[10] and *The Letter*.[11]

Overall, *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis* addresses the intricate and interwoven relationship between translation and writing, evidenced by the intertextuality that permeates both practices. This relationship is to be examined in light of the literary polysystem. The border between translation and writing has been breached, for Davis' works constitute a harmonious duet between writer and translator. Translation has, consequently, claims to creativity along this porous border, a vivid term coined by Evans. In short, this book is relevant not only for translator studies, but also for general translation studies and comparative literature.

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NOTES

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