

Translation as Collaboration: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and S. S. Koteliansky.
Claire Davison (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014) x + 194pp.

Claire Davison's *Translation as Collaboration: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and S. S. Koteliansky* delves deeply into the co-translations of Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Leonard Woolf, and John Middleton Murry executed in collaboration with the Russian émigré S. S. Koteliansky. Among Davison's goals in her five-chapter study is that of illuminating the difference in concerns of these writer-translators from those of their peers, such as Constance Garnett, suggesting that their co-translations not only influenced their own modernist project but also anticipated contemporary translation theory. By comparing French and English translations of various passages drawn from the works of Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and several of their contemporaries, Davison provides a detailed analysis of translation choices privileged in particular by Mansfield and Virginia Woolf and what their translations reveal about their own ongoing concerns as they set out as writers and publishers between 1915 and 1923. As Davison writes, "The code-switching experiments that both Woolf and Mansfield try out by expanding translation conceptually as metaphor show them experimenting intuitively with the sort of creative outsidership conceived philosophically by Bakhtin, and more recently by Heinz Wismann—not just cultivating an awareness of foreignness but unthinking oneself through foreignness" (32). Davison has structured her study to demonstrate through juxtapositions of many specific excerpts of translations just how these co-translations of the Russians offer new insight into understanding the texts of the Russians, be it in their consideration of gender, focalization, dialogism, the performative aspect of translation, the liminal space that the act of translating occupies, or the unruliness of language that many translations seek to tame yet which come alive when translators leave their rough edges intact.

Davison's first chapter, "Unknown Languages and Unruly Selves: Thinking through Translation," underlines the goals of Koteliansky, who, as a Russian émigré, saw an opportunity that "via translation he could feed the public's interest in Russian literature and the arts" (21) and also earn a living. Though his English was often weak, by collaborating with Woolf and Mansfield, "both passionate readers of Russian literature," Koteliansky "became" a translator whose "working praxis reveals a purist's commitment to the original text, and an accompanying sense of translation as a hermeneutic quest" (22). Woolf, on the other hand, is portrayed as a writer for whom translation is "a transformative encounter *across* languages—those we are born or educated into, or those encountered later,

however briefly . . ." (27). Mansfield is shown to be multi-lingual, even if her knowledge of different languages was imperfect, and she is less driven by class consciousness than Woolf is, which would account for some of the differences in their attitudes toward translating. According to Davison, "in Woolf's overall thinking on translation, knowledge, presumption and mastery impede and mutilate meaning, while impure, imperfect translations blossom into poetry" (28), while "Mansfield demonstrates a positive delight in translation as improvisation and play, illustrating rather than debating the pitfalls and serendipities to be found when language travels" (30).

In her second chapter, "'Representing by Means of Scenes': Translating Voices," Davison focuses on how Woolf, Mansfield, and Koteliensky see translation as "a theatricalisation or multiplication of borrowed voices" (52), which she considers a product of the changing environment in which modernism is born, citing the "unprecedented clamour of voices" engendered by radio broadcasting, the battle for women's suffrage, representative democracy, and the beginnings of experimental psychology (55). Here Davison successfully demonstrates differences between "dialogized, performative conceptualisations of translating" (56) that characterize Woolf's and Mansfield's co-translations as opposed to the more classic and literal nineteenth-century translations of the Russians into French. Davison's study is certainly thorough, replete with a multitude of examples to reveal in minute detail significant differences in syntax, word choice, and point of view that suggest how these canonical Russian authors can be differently read.

In "'The queerest sense of echo', or Translating Imprudent Movables," her third chapter, Davison, drawing on the work of Emily Dalgarno, demonstrates how Woolf made use of her endeavors as a translator as a way of separating herself from realism and "extract[ing] the feminine consciousness from supposedly gender-neutral or male-focused classics" (85). She sees Woolf and Mansfield as "queering translation's pitch" (85) as they cross boundaries and shift emphases in an attempt to convey "Dostoevsky's destabilising, dialogic workings" (87) and "deliberately shifting voices" (89). Davison sees Mansfield and Woolf as similarly attentive to "emerging spaces and marginal selves" in the Russians' presentation of female characters, but without an equivalent dwelling on how the Russians construct male characters, despite their prominence in the novels' plots (95). Davison has chosen fascinating examples of the way this shift in focus allows marginal female characters a subjectivity that could easily be "lost in translation." Both Woolf and Mansfield are presented as appreciating the transgressiveness of Dostoevsky's and Chekhov's texts, which they seek to convey in their translations.

Moving into the concerns of publishing and marketing in "Editors' Choice: Craftmanship and the Marketplace," her fourth chapter, Davison illuminates the

editorial choices that “were an essential part of the overall translation strategy, marking another break with the dominant modes of translation and publishing policy one generation earlier” (112). Instead of making translations “smooth and readable,” writes Davison, “[t]he Koteliansky co-translations mediate between cultures differently” by providing “notes, essays and biographical insights,” as the Woolfs’ Hogarth Press translations did (112-113). The roles of the co-translators and their copy-editors, who often smoothed out the deliberately rough edges of the translations; the readings Virginia Woolf did of Leonard’s co-translations and vice versa (often not credited) and Mansfield’s co-translations for which Murry often took credit after his wife’s untimely death; the titling of texts and the liberties taken; and the ethics of writing and publishing are among the various topics carefully examined by Davison, who always returns to the crucial question of which choices have been made and how they influence both the reading of the translations as well as the emerging modernist texts of the translators themselves.

In her final chapter, “Biographical Writing in Translation, or variations on the Meaning of ‘Life,’” Davison considers the proliferation of collaborative translations of biographical texts that present “alternative methods for exploring creative lives” (143). According to Davison, the writing of “lives” by the Russians not only “inspired the co-translators to try out new methods in their translations,” but also influenced their own conceptions of biography itself (143). Davison argues through numerous examples that these translations of “lives” that the Woolfs, Mansfield, Murry, and Koteliansky undertook were influenced by the “translator-as-biographer’s own lives” (156) and that they sought to portray “the mind of the writer” rather than simply the writer (157).

Claire Davison’s *Translation as Collaboration* will be especially appreciated by scholars whose background includes translation theory, as it is driven by its many examples and comparisons of different translators’ choices, strategies, and praxis and its effort to demonstrate these co-translators’ departure from earlier modes of translation, anticipating much more recent contemporary trends in translating. Scholars of the evolution of Woolf’s and Mansfield’s modernist ventures will also find much that is useful in this study’s examination of their interaction with the texts of Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Dostoevsky and the nature of their co-translation. I should add that it would help Davison’s readers to have a reading knowledge of French as many passages throughout this study are not translated yet are used to demonstrate the differences that occurred in French translations of these same authors. Nevertheless, for those whose interest encompasses the crucial role of modernist collaborative translations of major Russian authors, Davison’s study will surely be seen as groundbreaking and significant.

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