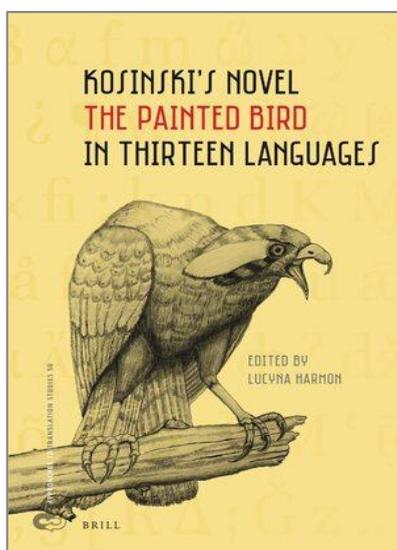


BOOKS

Lucyna Harmon (ed.), *Kosinski's Novel The Painted Bird in Thirteen Languages*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2022, 229 p.

Set in an unidentified country but ostensibly charting his own experiences during the time of the Holocaust, Jerzy Kosinski's harrowing 1965 novel *The Painted Bird* has been translated and disseminated across the world. Of the over two dozen tongues that Kosinski's best-known work has appeared in (aside from its original English), Kosinski's Novel *The Painted Bird in Thirteen Languages* presents detailed scholarly analyses of the translations into selected Slavic (Polish, Russian, Serbian/Croatian, Ukrainian), Germanic (German, Norwegian), and Romance (French, Romanian, Spanish) languages, as well as Greek and Persian.

Edited by Lucyna Harmon, literary and translation studies scholar and head of Translation Studies at the University of Rzeszów (Poland), and published by Brill in



its prestigious 'Approaches to Translation Studies' series, the volume contains chapters authored by international scholars affiliated to institutions located in a dozen countries. Each contribution approaches various aspects relating to *The Painted Bird* and its translation from a unique angle, yet cohesion is provided by the common threads which are outlined in Harmon's introductory chapter. In addition to providing necessary information about the genesis and purview of the project, Harmon centres the scope of the book through the creation of two innovative concepts. The first relates to discussing notions of an "involved" culture (i.e. one suggested in the novel's events) and how it is portrayed in the various translations of a given work; this is contrasted with "uninvolved" or "detached" (pp. 2-3). The

second revolves around Harmon's concept of "the universe of the opus", defined here as something that "encompasses all the available versions/facets of a given literary work that circulate in the world, establishing and maintaining the position of this work on a large (world literature) or small scale (within particular target cultures)" (p. 3). Accordingly, this introductory section sets out both of these novel ideas and situates them with reference to the necessary theoretical literature.

The requisite sociocultural and historical context behind Kosinski and his most famous work is outlined and discussed in Chapter 2. Here, in tracing the author's biography from his birth to Jewish parents in Poland, through his wartime experience, and subsequent emigration to the United States, Elżbieta Rokosz presents the numerous controversies that surrounded Kosinski and his literary production. These include longstanding debates relating to the veracity of the events depicted in *The Painted Bird*, uncertainty regarding its authorship and the original language of the manuscript, as well as questions of how the novel was received in the author's native land. Accordingly, Kosinski's stratospheric rise to literary celebrity in a new country and in a new language is analysed through the seemingly fluid boundary he maintained between fiction and reality.

The next three chapters present the findings of translations into the languages of "involved" cultures. Chapter 3, by Łukasz Barciński, scrutinises the Polish translation by first contextualising the translator and possible influences on his decision-making processes, before undertaking a comprehensive analysis of

how certain onomastic, folkloristic, historical, religious, and ethnographical details are presented in the translated text. The contribution by volume editor Lucyna Harmon (Chapter 4) profiles the interesting divergences that the German translation of *The Painted Bird* displays in comparison to the original English text, drawing attention not only to relevant paratextual and semantic aspects but also highlighting several important omissions which appear in the German version. Subsequently, Valentyna Savchyn's study (Chapter 5) examines the Ukrainian and Russian translations of the book through the prism of corrective translation, which is where the translator appears to attempt to rectify certain potentially problematic aspects of a given source text.

The two Spanish-language translations of *The Painted Bird* are detailed in Chapter 6. Against the backdrop of literary censorship in Spain under Franco's dictatorship, Jordi Jané-Lligé charts their convoluted journey to publication (which eventually took place in Latin America), before embarking on a detailed comparative analysis of the two versions, highlighting the notably different strategies used by the two translators. Svetlana Jakimovska's contribution (Chapter 7) foregrounds how ethnic and cultural aspects are translated in the first French version of the book, which displays pronounced deviations from the source text. Additions, omissions, and semantic changes relating to the Norwegian translation are highlighted in Oleksandr Kapranov's analysis (Chapter 8), where he interprets these factors through the lens of the translator's self-censorship as it pertains to potentially sensitive issues relating to ethnicity and religion.

As detailed by Paschalis Nikolaou in Chapter 9, the Greek translation of *The Painted Bird* came out comparatively recently, in 2007. Before offering some remarks on how the translation was received in the Greek literary press, Nikolaou presents and discusses relevant semantic, narrative, and evaluative changes in that version as compared to the English source text. In a similar vein, Raluca Sinu (Chapter 10) performs an in-depth analysis of the Romanian version of the novel, mentioning additionally the translator's apparent decisions to attenuate some of the more explicit elements featured in the original. The two translations of Kosinski's novel into Serbo-Croatian/Serbian are the subject of Borislava Eraković's analysis (Chapter 11), which includes paratextual analysis relating to the book's cover and bibliographic information as a way of contextualising some of the changes that these translations display vis-à-vis the source text. The study and analysis of paratextual features additionally forms part of the last study of the volume (Chapter 12) by Fatemeh Parham, who also profiles textual aspects relating to the Persian translation of *The Painted Bird*, noting the existence of specific legal directives on what type of content can appear in works published in Iran.

The book closes with a Coda (Chapter 13), where volume editor Lucyna Harmon contrasts and discusses the diverse findings presented by the book's contributors through the prism of the two common threads mentioned in her introductory chapter. With regard to the "involved"

cultures, she compares and evaluates the German, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian renditions of *The Painted Bird*, subsequently moving on to broader discussion of how Kosinski's most famous works can be situated with the concept of "universe of the opus", before proffering suggested avenues for additional research.

In summary, *Kosinski's Novel The Painted Bird in Thirteen Languages* is an important read for researchers in translation studies seeking new perspectives on the multiplicity of interpretations that the various translations of a common source text can provide. As such, the reviewed work highlights points of synergy and divergence between the different translations of *The Painted Bird*, acknowledging the diversity of perspectives assumed by the individual contributors. In addition to giving unity to the work as a whole, Harmon's notions of an "involved culture" and "the universe of the opus" are innovative theoretical concepts which will surely be applied to other scholarly analyses in the future. As recent publications on the translations of Kosinski's novel into other languages (e.g. Mandarin Chinese, Dutch) illustrate, the concepts and analysis contained in this volume represent an excellent foundation for further scholarly enquiry worldwide.

Antony HOYTE-WEST

*PhD, Independent scholar
United Kingdom*

Email: antony.hoyte.west@gmail.com

