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Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference And The Politics Of Translation (Afterlives Of The Bible)



Synopsis

Faithful Renderings reads translation history through the lens of Jewish "Christian difference and, conversely, views Jewish "Christian difference as an effect of translation. Subjecting translation to a theological-political analysis, Seidman asks how the charged Jewish "Christian relationship "and more particularly the dependence of Christianity on the texts and translations of a rival religion "has haunted the theory and practice of translation in the West. Bringing together central issues in translation studies with episodes in Jewish "Christian history, Naomi Seidman considers a range of texts, from the Bible to Elie Wiesel's *Night*, delving into such controversies as the accuracy of various Bible translations, the medieval use of converts from Judaism to Christianity as translators, the censorship of anti-Christian references in Jewish texts, and the translation of Holocaust testimony. Faithful Renderings ultimately reveals that translation is not a marginal phenomenon but rather a crucial issue for understanding the relations between Jews and Christians and indeed the development of each religious community.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Faithful Renderings is an interesting read because of what it reveals about the encoding of Yiddish with insider words and expressions, many of which are derogatory of Christian dogma and practice. Professor Seidman asserts that this encoding is only partially understood by American Jews, because of their impoverished Yiddish. The author's underlying premise, that translation is

inherently unfaithful because the "secret" subtext is lost, is true, but trivial. The language or dialect of every minority seen as "other" by the majority seems to have terms and expressions with special, more-or-less secret, meanings, especially meanings that lampoon the majority and its mores. One need look no further than the argots of urban Americans of African descent, with their usage of "honky," "cracker," etc. Even the young of the majority, who tend to see themselves as an oppressed minority, develop "secret" meanings and words with unflattering references to their elders. Dr. Seidman inadequately recognizes that even without purposefully encoded secrets, intended meaning is vitiated due to the passage of time and changes in pronunciation and meaning. Few English-speakers can capture the very pronunciations of words before the "great vowel shift." Our relationships with time and space change, and we can only partially comprehend what, to use C.S. Lewis' example, the philosophical approach to suffering was in a society without anesthetics. This book doesn't offer much in the way of a larger or more profound point, but she does recount some wonderful illustrations of unfaithful renderings. There are some enjoyable throwaways like her quote of, "Speaking Yiddish has been described as inhabiting a portable Yiddishland."

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