Translating Crusoe (and Friday) in the 1720s.

The first French translation of *Robinson Crusoe* (1720)

Abstract

My presentation will focus on the first French translation of *Robinson Crusoe*, *La vie et les avantures surprenantes de Robinson Crusoe* (Amsterdam, 1720). The translation was principally undertaken by Justus van Effen (with some contribution from Thémiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe) and should be placed in the context of the first translations of the novel in the 1720s and 1730s, into German, Dutch, and Italian. After an examination of the French translation, including its reception and its relationship with other contemporaneous translations, I will proceed to analyze two distinct types of interpretative contributions made by the translator. On the one hand, I will analyze the translator’s preface, in which Van Effen takes a position on an aspect of the novel that was of great relevance for readers of the 1720s: the question of its authenticity. On the other, I will concentrate on the micro-textual level. I will conduct a textual comparison of the English source text and the French translation in order to examine how Van Effen translates the complex relationship between Crusoe and Friday, particularly the terms defining Friday’s identity as Crusoe’s *servant*. In both cases, I will draw a comparison with the Dutch, German, and Italian translations in order to gain a deeper understanding of the French translator’s choices.

Bio-note

Diego Stefanelli is a post-doc researcher at the Faculty of Translation Studies, Linguistics and Cultural Studies of the University of Mainz (campus Germersheim). His current research concerns the history of translation in France during the 17th and 18th centuries, with a particular focus on scientific works and travel literature.