



# Art of Translating Prose

*By Burton Raffel*

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## Art of Translating Prose By Burton Raffel

There has been very little linguistically sound discussion of the differences between poetry and prose, and virtually no discussion of any sort of the practical consequences of those differences for the translation of prose. The Art of Translating Prose presents for both the specialist and nonspecialist the core strategies employed by the author in translating a variety of important prose texts, and in the process delineates a coherent program or theory that can inform each act of translation. Burton Raffel considers and effectively illustrates the fundamental features of prose, those features that most clearly and idiomatically define an author's style. He addresses those features that must be attended closely and imaginatively as one moves them from the original-language work. Raffel's insistence on concentrating on the artistic viability of the translation continues themes he explored in other books, most notably *The Forked Tongue* and *The Art of Translating Poetry*. Raffel finds the most important determinant--for prose, though not for poetry--to be syntax, which he argues must be tracked if the translation is to reflect the original author's style in a meaningful way. Raffel ties together theory and practice to establish sound standards for the evaluation of prose translations, and he provides examples in considerations of versions of such books as *Madame Bovary*, *Germinal*, and *Death in Venice*.

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#### Review

Burton Raffel is arguably the greatest living translator of works of verbal art into English, and his authority in the field derives not only from the volume to which this book is intended to serve as companion (The Art of Translating Poetry) but also from his epoch-making series of actual translations, from medieval English, Indonesian, Latin, French, German, Spanish, Greek, and other tongues. This is an extraordinarily important contribution to the field. --John Miles Foley, University of Missouri

#### About the Author

Burton Raffel is Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and author of many books, including *Artists All* (Penn State, 1991) and *The Art of Translating Poetry* (Penn State, 1988). He is the translator of Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Norton, 1990), winner of the 1991 French-American Foundation Translation Prize; Balzac's *Pere Goriot* (Norton, 1994), and a forthcoming new version of Cervantes's *Don Quijote*..

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