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This volume explores *translation* in postcolonial, multilingual settings in the figurative sense of the word – as movement between cultures or the “translation of bodies” – and in its literal meaning, which involves the close study of a source text and a target text. The work brings together scholars from the fields of postcolonial studies and translation studies and is thus intended as a reply to Susan Bassnett’s call in 2013 for the establishment of a dialogue between these two fields of research, (as referred to by the editors in the introduction of the present volume).

The thirteen essays included here report on issues related to linguistic heterogeneity, postcolonial resistance, and ‘border’ identities. For reasons of cohesion, these essays are restricted to the geographical areas where French and English are spoken. To a certain degree, this bilingual limitation (with respect to French and English) is also mirrored in the languages used in the articles; despite the fact that the number of articles in English (ten) clearly outnumbers those written in French (three). The geographical zones that are included in this volume, however, are more evenly distributed. The reader will note that all four sections (“Translating Islands”, “Translator’s Africa”, “The Mediterranean as/in Translation”, and “The Americas in Translation”) contain studies of French- and English-speaking regions or countries. Roughly half of the contributions adopt a perspective that includes both French and English. Other languages that are referred to in this work are Mauritian, Haitian, Reunionese and Louisianan Creole, Hindi, Gikuyu, Wolof, Swahili, Arabic, Mā’ohi, Māori, and, to some extent, Chinese.

The authors have primarily investigated ‘contemporary situations’; i.e., literature or other artistic expressions that were produced during the latter part of the 20th century and onwards. One exception to this is the study of late 19th century New Orleans. The essays analyze novels written by some of the most renowned postcolonial writers; for example, Maryse Condé and Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o, as well as works by less well-known authors; for example, the Lebanese-Canadian actor, writer, and director, Wajdi Mouawad. Two essays examine world famous authors which are not exclusively (Albert Camus) or hardly (Amy Tan) associated with the ‘postcolonial’. The topics addressed in these essays are varied, and although perhaps not particularly unfamiliar to the discipline, they include, for example, ‘self-translation’, ‘paratext’, ‘dual readership’, ‘testimonial writing’, ‘institutional recognition’ (in the form of international literary awards), ‘reader reception’, and ‘translation as a stylistic literary device’. Of especial value are the contributions which deal more specifically with the topic of ‘postcolonial areas as target cultures’; the extent to which these areas serve as a market for, or a producer of, in-translations. I highlight the value of such work because this perspective has not been subject to wide-ranging attention in the literature. For example, consider Julia Waters’ article on the Mauritian author, Ananda Devi, and the author’s self-translation of her novel *Pagli* into English, for the Indian market. Waters shows how this act of rewriting led to important changes of style and content in the translation; most importantly, the author has reinforced her critique of prevailing ethnic divisions of an island society – divisions imposed upon descendants of slavery and indenture.

The essays show that ‘translation’ clearly remains to function as a useful metaphor for the articulation of postcolonial resistance, since postcolonial works may successfully be read as ‘translations’. Consider Megan C. MacDonald’s parallel reading of Algerian author Malika Mokeddem’s novel *N’Zid* and Frantz Fanon’s multilingual passport, located in a French archive in Normandy. Focusing on the notion of ‘amnesia’, she argues that both items can be read as maps of the Mediterranean and as (albeit, metaphorical) ways of translating Algeria. Another example is Tobias Warner’s study of two versions of Ousmane Sembène’s *La Noire De...* (the original from 1966 and the restored version from 2008). In order to obtain funding from French sources, the Senegalese director had to make notable changes to his original work; changes which have undeniable implications with respect to the artistic expression of the film. Warner notes that a color sequence was cut from the film and the African protagonist’s voice was replaced by the voice of a Haitian actress. According to Warner, “[t]he film presents itself a site of translation, turning the restrictions it confronted into an immanent aspect of its aesthetic” (p. 115).

The present volume should also remind the reader that the need for cultural translation to reach a Western readership is not a thing of the past. In her analysis of Rwandan women’s testimony writings, Catherine Gilbert observes that patronage by Western intellectuals (in the form of collaboration, prefaces etc.) was a necessary condition for these narratives to be published. On the other hand, mediation without such cultural translation may run the risk of failing to ensure that communication with the Other takes place. Valérie Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo argues, for example, that self-translations and bilingual writings in La Réunion are often left unheard, because these editions seldom reach a wider audience, either locally or in mainland France, and thus these works pose a challenge to the idea of ‘translation as mediation’. According to this author, these expressions of resistance or ‘hybridity’ would be too difficult for a French audience unfamiliar with the source culture to access.

The use of paratextual materials in the process of translating postcolonial literature is certainly far from uncontroversial and has been severally criticized in the literature. In her article on literary translation of indigenous writers from New Zealand and Tahiti in the Polynesian Pacific, Jean Anderson invites the reader, however, to reevaluate this strategy. Anderson argues that Pacific Islander authors are less concerned with “talking back” to the former *métropole* and are more interested in the act of “talking to”. Consequently, their (Pacific Islander) texts necessitate a translation strategy which ensures that the person who is “talked to” (i.e., the reader of the target text) is invited to listen. A translator herself, Anderson provides us with a set of examples of how the bicultural nature of the original works (English and Māori; French and Mā’ohi) can be maintained in translation; all the while not jeopardizing the understanding of the reader, whether they be local- or global readers. Anderson does note, however, that not every publisher might allow for such creative renderings of the subversive techniques often used by postcolonial authors. Given this, Anderson suggests that the translator may make use of a certain degree of paratextual “intervention”. In the light of her aim of creating an informed “community of readers”, Anderson’s suggestion appears as both a pragmatic and sympathetic way of encouraging regional- and international distribution and consumption of translated postcolonial fiction.

One cannot but congratulate the editors for producing this volume, since it is indeed a true gem; it is rich and diverse in perspectives and approaches, while, at the same time, includes a good number of high-quality articles covering most parts of the world where French and English are spoken (Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, North America, and Islands in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific). Taking the current importance of the ‘sociological turn’ in translation studies into account, one might, however, perhaps have wished for one or

two essays that used methodologies more common to the social sciences, including statistical analyses, surveys, interviews, and such like. Such an approach could provide the reader with more information with respect to the actual consumers of postcolonial artistic expression.

References

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