

### **Translation Flows: Exploring Networks of People, Processes and Products.**

Ilse Feinauer, Amanda Marais and Marius Swart (eds.). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2023. 252 pp. ISBN 9789027214249.

In 2019, the European Society for Translation Studies for the first time held its Congress outside Europe—in Stellenbosch, South Africa. *Translation Flows* is the resulting volume of 12 discerningly selected, double-blind peer reviewed papers read at that 9<sup>th</sup> Congress. Departing from translation as a social practice, emphasis is placed not so much on the products of translation, but on how and what translation transfers, that is, on the dynamics of how translation ‘flows’ and on the networks associated with translation processes and practices, and the people involved.

The field of translation studies is enriched by the diversity (in terms of languages, cultures, methodologies, and objectives) of the participants who contribute to it. In this volume, contributions on translation practices outside Europe add new insights and perspectives, mostly within our common and familiar Eurocentric theoretical frameworks.

Organised in two sections, one on historical and the other on contemporary perspectives and practices, other binary lines are also identifiable (such as recent contemplations, in the wake of decolonisation, on physical geospaces like the Global South and the Global North, and the conceptual spaces/dichotomies of African versus Western philosophies).

The volume opens with five contributions in the historical section. The first, by Anthony Pym (who holds positions on three different continents), “naïvely” (4) but thought-provokingly reflects on whether translation took place between Aboriginal languages in pre-Invasion Australia (before 1788) and what its nature would have been. Much information was inferred from secondary sources and gleaned from experts in anthropology and linguistics—but also from descendants of the First Nations, who, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, still adhere to Aboriginal cultural practices intimately tied to language and communication. Pym describes striking differences between Western and Aboriginal views and practices, ranging from culturally entrenched ‘rules’ on mediation (“who has the right to speak with whom”, 4) and the hermeneutics of interpretation (assigning meaning to a story, 17) to the use of non-linguistic semiotic resources (sign languages, message sticks, etc.). Despite the speakers being polyglots, thus limiting the need for interlingual translation, carefully chosen messengers would be sent forth to cross language boundaries to deliver a message, and those messengers would translate orally as would be appropriate in a specific situation. Intriguingly, Pym highlights numerous differences between Western and Aboriginal thinking on translation, concluding that “slower cultural practices [that] spend longer on collective sense-making across several media” (18) are not only conducive to, but in fact imperative for allowing for a free flow of information.

In some respects, South African scholar Maricel Botha’s contribution runs parallel to that of Pym. In contemporary Nigeria and the surrounding West African countries, many indigenous languages are spoken, but owing to the hegemony of ex-colonial languages in the post-independence period, indigenous languages barely figure in inter-societal information flows that involve translation. The exception is the hugely successful way in which Nigerian (Nollywood) films produced in the informal economy by amateur film makers cross national borders into neighbouring countries. These films use indigenous languages, which are highly regarded as expressions of identity (130), and the subject matter of these films draw on topics that are culturally relevant (137) in the local societies

and among diasporic communities outside Africa. Translations are mostly done by lay practitioners, who work at lightning speed under poor conditions and receive a meagre remuneration for their efforts, which are often of poor quality (131, 139). Mediation strategies include subtitling, ‘dubbing’ by a single person who translates all roles and perform cultural mediation (by omission and/or insertion), live oral interpreting at public screenings (142) and even the production of DVDs that contain ‘dubbing’ of an indigenous-language film but creates a soundtrack that is ‘invented’, based on the visual imagery of the film (142). Botha uses Tyulenev’s application of Luhmann’s social systems theory to describe this phenomenon and how it works. She concludes that the benefits of the unique ‘informal’ system of film translation in Nigeria include elevating the status of the indigenous languages, disrupting language imperialism, and creating a form of post-colonial cultural pan-Africanism (137).

Community-driven video-game fan translation practices form the focus of the chapter by Selahattin Karagöz. Undertaken by gamers with an intimate knowledge of the gaming industry, strong personal preferences, and few (if any) expectations of commercial gain, the situational correspondences with film subtitling in Nigeria seem apparent. Another point of correspondence is the location of the study outside Western Europe—in Turkey, which features in two more contributions. One is a historically oriented study by Sare Rabia Öztürk of how the classical Ottoman intercultural scene came to be; the other is Dyugu Tekgül-Akin’s investigation of the role literary agents play in commissioning translations, contributing to image building, and influencing the overall flow of translated texts. Literary circulation in the Caribbean is the topic of Létitia Saint-Loubert’s chapter that connects Caribbean Studies and Translation Studies in studying translation flows from the Caribbean. The transnational flow of Chinese texts in translation is the topic of an empirical study in which Bei Hu concludes that readers’ trust in the (individual) translator increases their willingness to accept translation trade-offs that seem mutually contradictory, by compromising at the perceived intersection of maximum desired effects and minimum risks.

The remaining five chapters cover more ‘traditional’ and ‘familiar’ ground in terms of translation in Europe, although in Sofía Monzón Rodríguez’s investigation, the directionality of translations of Spanish and Catalan romans à clef is from Argentina to Franco’s Spain. In another historical study, Philipp Hofeneder investigates the circulation of knowledge versus the mobility of

translation; a phenomenon that is also studied by Paola Gentile in her research on how translation policy and imagology combine in the case of Dutch literature in Italy. The role of politically committed publishers in Spain is investigated by Fruela Fernández, who asks, “Recognition versus redistribution?” (a historical perspective). An evaluation of contemporary politics is the subject of Yvonne Lindqvist’s consideration whether four major intersecting events that led to Caribbean author Maryse Condé having been awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize have annulled her chances of being awarded the ‘regular’ Nobel Prize in Literature.

Like translation, reviewing also calls for choices and trade-offs. I hope my detailed discussion of the contributions by Pym and Botha serves as an aperitif, enticing readers to indulge in the other ten chapters of *Translation Flows*, which I could only briefly introduce within the scope of this review.

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