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This anthology examines the nature and consequences of cultural transfers – ways in which cultural, social and political/ideological elements cross national and cultural boundaries, how they are changed and how they affect the contexts in which they arrive. Processes of translation and adaptation play an important role, as do the roles performed by different actors – governmental, academic, and artistic.

The Dynamics and Contexts of Cultural Transfers collects articles from the research network U4 (universities of Ghent, Groningen, Göttingen and Uppsala). They highlight questions of different power relations, of what is national and what is world literature, and how cultural transfer intertwines ideas on culture and literature.

The Dynamics and Contexts of Cultural Transfers

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The Dynamics and Contexts of Cultural Transfers

An anthology

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AVDELNINGEN FÖR LITTERATURSOCIologi
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2017

The papers in this volume have been peer-reviewed by external readers.

Contents

<i>Petra Broomans, Margaretha Fablgren & Anna Williams</i>	7
Introduction	
<i>Arend Elias Oostindier</i>	
Cultural Transfer and the Poetics of Medieval Translation: A Social and Medial Approach to <i>Amicus</i> or <i>Amilius</i> Saga	13
<i>Marja van Tilburg</i>	
On Femininity as an Interface: How Enlightenment Concepts Influenced Explorers' Reports of the Pacific	33
<i>Åsa Arping & Yvonne Leffler</i>	
The Wonderful Adventures of Swedish Everyday Life: Female Domestic Novels on Export in the Nineteenth Century	53
<i>Petra Broomans</i>	
A Cultural Transfer History – Possibilities and Prerequisites: The Case of Henriette Roland Holst, Martha Muusses and Hagar Olsson	79
<i>Dag Blanck</i>	
Migration and Modernity: A Swedish-American Argument	101
<i>Adam Hjorthén</i>	
Swedishness by Blood: Transatlantic Genealogy on Twenty-First Century Television	127
<i>Johan Svedjedal</i>	
Swedish Prose Fiction in a Global Perspective	149

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Margaretha Fablgren & Anna Williams
Work and Women Abroad: Aspects of the
Reception of Translated Swedish Working-Class
and Feminist Literature

169

Alison E. Martin
Revision and Re-Visioning: Vira Sackville-West's
Family History in 20th- and 21st-Century Germany

191

Jeanette den Toonder
Cultural Dialogue in Kamel Daoud's
Meursault, contre-enquête: Mirror Images and the
Encounter of Strangers

207

Contributors

227

Index

233

Petra Broomans, Margaretha Fablgren
& Anna Williams

Introduction

The study of cultural transfer and transmission is an expanding research line within the broader context of literary history and cultural studies. After the pessimism expressed by scholars such as David Perkins in *Literary History Possible?* (1992) concerning the possibility of writing national or international literary history and the validity of the discourse of literary history, a revival of interest in national canons occurred at the beginning of the 21st century. At the same time, Peter Burke and Michel Espagne, *inter alia*, called for a transnational approach and greater focus on mediators within cultural studies, especially cultural transfer studies. Furthermore, the relationship between the center and the periphery (in two senses: in terms of dominating versus small language areas, and men versus women in the literary field) was scrutinized in various studies.

The edited volume *The Dynamics and Contexts of Cultural Transfers* has its origin in a workshop at the Department of Literature at Uppsala University, in December 3–4, 2015, preceded by a workshop in Groningen in December 2014, and followed by another meeting in Ghent in October 2016. The workshops were arranged within the research network U4 between the universities of Ghent, Groningen, Göttingen and Uppsala. The purpose is to examine the nature and consequences of flows and transfers – ways in which cultural, social and political/ideological elements cross national and cultural boundaries, how they are changed and how they affect the contexts in which they

arrive. Processes of translation and adaptation play an important role, as do the roles performed by different actors – governmental, academic, and artistic.

Various research trajectories have merged within the U4 network. Uppsala has developed the research profile “Swedish Literature as World Literature”, which resulted in the volume *Svensk litteratur som världslitteratur* (Swedish literature as world literature, ed. Johan Svedjedal) in 2012. A PhD project is underway about the work and strategies by Swedish publishers with contemporary literature translated from German, French, Spanish and Italian. Scholars affiliated to Uppsala are engaged in a comprehensive research program at Stockholm University titled “World literatures: Cosmopolitan and vernacular dynamics” (project leader: Stefan Helgesson). The Hugo Valentin Centre in Uppsala works with migrants and minorities. This is also the case in Ghent, where a PhD-candidate is currently working with minority literature. In Groningen, various scholars within the field of cultural transfer studies have collaborated in the project “Beyond Horizons in Cultural Transfer Studies” (a spin-off of the project “Peripheral autonomy? A longitudinal analysis of cultural transfer in the literary fields of small language communities”, conducted at the universities of Ghent, Groningen and Uppsala, 2006–2012). In Ghent as well as in Groningen, PhD projects on cultural transmitters and their networks have been carried out. Göttingen has a long tradition in cultural transfer studies with projects in which the cultural transfer between Denmark, Germany and France was studied.

The U4 network of Cultural Transfer Research is not restricted to staff members of the U4 universities, but is also open for scholars from other institutions. This is already reflected in this volume.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributors to the volume *The Dynamics and Contexts of Cultural Transfers* come from the universities of Amsterdam, Ghent, Gothenburg, Groningen, Reading, Stockholm, and Uppsala. The volume mirrors a variety of subjects within the field of cultural transfer studies within the U4 collaboration. It should be regarded as an ongoing discussion and exchange of ideas that we hope will continue and expand. The ten articles span over various time periods and subject areas; they are, however, connected by the aim of exploring the impact of cultural flows and relations on discourses, ideas and cultural development.

Medieval translations as encounters as well as negotiations between cultures are examined in Arend Elias Oostindij’s article “Cultural Transfer and the Poetics of Medieval Translation: A Social and Medial Approach to *Ammius* *ok Amilius Saga*”. It highlights modern, theoretical approaches to medieval translation and applies them on a fourteenth-century Icelandic translation of the saga. Pertinent conclusions bring forward the translator as mediator and the importance of the audience for the outcome of the translated work.

In “On Femininity as an Interface: How Enlightenment Concepts Influenced Explorers’ Reports of the Pacific”, Marja van Tilburg argues that different Enlightenment ideas about women’s nature led the explorers Forster (father and son) to contradictory interpretations of the Tahitian culture that they examined in the late 1700s – a circumstance that has not been properly acknowledged by contemporary research, due to an “anachronistic concept of femininity”.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Swedish novels by women writers were highly visible on the European book market. As Åsa Arping and Yvonne Leffler show in “The Wonderful Adventures of Swedish Everyday

Life: Female Domestic Novels on Export in the Nineteenth Century”, writers such as Fredrika Bremer, Emilie Flygare-Carlén and Marie Sophie Schwartz were keenly aware of the expectations from their middle-class audiences. The successful dissemination is explained by effective distribution and translation strategies, and the popularity of the subjects and choice of genre in women’s works of fiction.

The above tells a success story, but what about the unsuccessful ones? In “A Cultural Transfer History – Possibilities and Prerequisites: The Case of Henriette Roland Holst, Martha Muusses and Hagar Olsson”, Petra Broomans states that they are equally important for understanding the history and dynamics of cultural transfer. Through the example of the Dutch writer Roland Holst and her translators, she brings forward the transmitters and their circumstances, and stresses the importance of knowledge about material and context for the understanding of the success or failure of cultural transmission.

Swedish-American relations is the topic of Dag Blanck’s article “Migration and Modernity: A Swedish-American Argument”. In the analysis of a borderland without geographical borders but formed by people, ideas, information and goods, the factors of migration and modernity are crucial. The Swedish-American immigrant community initiated and changed the American view of modern Sweden, and the view of the U.S. in Sweden was likewise informed by the circular movements created by the emigration and parallel reform movements on both sides of the Atlantic.

Adam Hjorthén also explores American migration in his article “Swedishness by Blood: Transatlantic Genealogy on Twenty-First Century Television”. The popular TV-show *Allt för Sverige/The Great Swedish Adventure*, follows ten Americans of Swedish descent who travel to Sweden to discover their family history. The article discusses how the display of Swedishness and belonging is contradictory, shifting between cultural constructivism and biologism.

In the article “Swedish Prose Fiction in a Global Perspective” Johan Svedjedal shows that in the last forty years a change has taken place in relation to the most translated Swedish writers of fiction for adults. Today Swedish fiction in translation is part of a transnational entertainment industry. Swedish crime fiction is a huge international success which has made the diffusion processes much faster. This means that Swedish quality writers can be translated faster and they still have a vital impact on the role Swedish literature has in the literary world.

In the last forty years the number of translations of Swedish literature has increased considerably. In the article “Work and Women Abroad: Aspects of the Reception of Translated Swedish Working-Class and Feminist Literature” Margaretha Fahlgren and Anna Williams discuss feminist perspectives and social critique in the reception of working-class and feminist literature abroad. Even though Swedish working-class literature has been defined as a unique contribution to world literature, its impact abroad shows to be negligible.

In the article “Revision and Re-visioning: Vita Sackville-West’s *Family History* in 20th- and 21st-Century Germany” Alison E. Martin analyzes translations of Sackville-West’s novel in Germany from 1950 to 2012. *Family History* has fluctuated in and out of significance during the past fifty years, but the article shows how the “discovery” of the novel by feminist presses has re-visioned Sackville-West’s work.

The author Kamel Daoud wrote a novel in response to Albert Camus’s classic work *L’étranger* and gave a name to the anonymous Arab killed by Camus’s protagonist. In the article “Cultural Dialogue in Kamel Daoud’s *Mersault, contre-enquête: Mirror Images and the Encounter of Strangers*”, Jeanette den Toonder analyzes how the novel transgresses the postcolonial framework of writing back by establishing a cultural dialogue in which the separation between the Algerian experience and the French could be reduced.

The articles in this volume show that cultural transfer in the western world took place in all times, but that contexts, spaces, material and the way cultural transmitters acted/operated changed over time. Some new directions can be pointed out: the importance of gender, ethnicity, migration, center/major and periphery/minority are topics that enable new perspectives. Also the notion of (imagery) borders and how cultural transfer enables, expedites or even obstructs cultural and literary flows between local and national boundaries should be elaborated further. Furthermore, the study of cultural transfer highlights the question of what is national and what is world literature as well as scrutinizes how cultural transfer intertwines ideas on culture and literature.