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par Brian Mossop

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**Kate Sturge. *Representing Others: Translation, Ethnography and the Museum*. Manchester, St. Jerome, 2007, 198 p.**

In this book, Kate Sturge reviews writings in English in the fields of Ethnography (chapters 2-6) and Museum Studies (7 and 8), identifying points which she finds relevant to Translation Studies. I should immediately say that I had prior familiarity with only a small part of the literature she surveys, so I cannot comment on how well she covers the two fields. I will outline the book, focusing on those parts I found most interesting, and add some "outsider" observations as I go.

In Chapter 1, Sturge identifies those strands of Translation Studies which she believes can benefit from and perhaps also contribute to Ethnography and Museum Studies. Given the nature of writings in these fields, "...it doesn't make sense to look at translation as a mainly technical process of re-encoding stable meanings into a second linguistic code. We will see that the 'meanings' encoded by ethnographic representation are complex, unstable, hybrid; they are born of the contingencies of the receiving system rather than those of the source. ...translation in this view is a usually conflictual encounter..." (p. 2). The emphasis is thus on the idea that the Other (the people represented in an ethnographic publication or a museum) is not a given but is created by the ethnographer/museum curator, who decides how the Other will be described and also speaks for the Other. In Sturge's view, Ethnography and Museum Studies have advanced further along this line of inquiry than Translation Studies.

Chapter 2 introduces the notion of “translating culture.” This does not refer to the translator’s work of conveying to target-language readers the cultural information underlying source-language wordings. It is rather a metaphor used by some anthropologists to talk about the process of writing a description of a colonized or aboriginal people for Western readers. It’s “translation” in a broad sense, which I believe should always be signalled by inverted commas—a practice which would have been helpful here since on several occasions I had to stop to consider whether the broad or the narrow sense was intended.

TS scholars will certainly find it of interest to see how ethnographers have handled intercultural relations, but there is an obvious problem in calling their writing on the subject “translating”: while we have a text on the target side—the published ethnography—on the source side we seem to have not a text but rather the lives and practices of the people being described. However, for the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, culture is a semiotic and therefore language-like entity; that is, people’s behaviours have meanings for them, and it is these meanings which constitute culture and which we want to have interpreted for us when we read an ethnography (p. 6). Members of a culture who serve as “informants” interpret their culture’s behaviour for the visiting anthropologist, who then makes sense of what has been said. These statements can thus be seen (with some stretching, except where the statements are actually quoted) as a source text.

Chapter 3 discusses what anthropologists have had to say about differences between cultures. Franz Boas, the founding figure of American anthropology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, saw every culture as being equal in the sense of being highly developed in its own terms. Each culture was to be studied on its own terms rather than as an exemplar of various points on a universal scale from primitive to advanced, as the 19<sup>th</sup> century “evolutionists” had done. I would add in passing that Boas took this same approach in linguistics, another discipline in which he is a founding figure in the U.S. Indeed his two roles were related in that, as Sturge mentions, Boas saw language as the prime source of anthropological data. He paid attention to the exact wording of what people said as the most reliable indicator of their thought,

more reliable than what they did (pp. 102-105). In linguistics, the new approach meant an end to describing all the world's languages in terms of Latin grammatical categories, and an end to the notion that the inflectional languages, and specifically the Indo-European languages, were a culminating point of language development. Since linguistics was one of the major "inputs" to Translation Studies in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is worth noting that in many countries, the linguistics which fed into TS had a double genealogy in the first half of the century—it stemmed not just from Indo-European philology but also from anthropology. A very direct line can be traced from Bronislaw Malinowski (the founding figure of British anthropology) through Firth to Halliday and Catford, and a somewhat less direct one from Boas through Bloomfield to Nida in the US.

Since the only English-speaking countries discussed in the book are the U.S. and Britain, perhaps I could mention that anthropology in Canada also got under way at this same time, under two now famous figures—the Quebec folklorist Marius Barbeau, and the Boas-influenced linguist Edward Sapir (well known for his "linguistic relativism")—who worked together in the new anthropology division of the Geological Survey of Canada, a branch of the civil service, starting in 1911.

Like Boas, Malinowski was very interested in language. Since he saw linguistic forms as taking their meanings from the "context of culture" and also the "context of situation" (the circumstances under which the utterance containing the form was produced), he published long, heavily annotated stretches of discourse by the people he was describing. He used a three-line presentation format which has now been adopted by some TS scholars:

Waga bi-la,	i-gisay-dasi,	boge	i-katumatay-da	wala
Canoe he might go	they see us	already	they kill us	just

Were a canoe to sail out, they would see us, they would kill us directly. (p. 25)

Sturge notes how the glosses of the second line, while at first appearing to present straightforward linguistic information, actually produce strangeness and distance and are thus

interventionist rather than neutral. The word order of this line seems odd to TL readers but of course the corresponding order of the SL words in the first line seems perfectly ordinary to SL speakers. At worst, the gloss line may make it appear that the mental world of SL speakers is incoherent, and thus suggest cultural inferiority. On the other hand, the three-line approach openly proclaims the fact that translation is not a simple matter. It dramatizes the difficulties. We are encouraged to think about what actually happens during translation. The difference between the second and third line conveys simultaneous sameness and difference.

If the fluent third line appeared by itself, readers might get the notion that everyone else is really “just like us.” But, notes Sturge, some writers have mentioned that the worlds of different peoples *are* in fact now becoming more alike because of telecommunications, travel and migration. One possibility for representing this is to use hybrid language rather than the three-line approach or a fluent translation alone.

Sturge gives an interesting example of yet another approach, in which the ethnographer tried to solve the “just like us” vs. “utterly different from us” dilemma by citing an SL word, giving multiple glosses instead of a misleading single one (“compassion/ love/sadness”), and then using the SL word in a quotation from an informant (“When my brothers went away to high school, I *fago*...When they left, my *fago* made me unable to function. ...Now it has calmed down a bit because it’s been a long time”) (p. 23).

The early interest in linguistic matters on the part of figures such as Malinowski and Boas is not a general feature of ethnography, particular when it comes to translation (in the narrow sense). Sturge criticizes the “striking lack of attention in practical handbooks of anthropology to the requirements of translation” (p. 13). Commonly it is not clear how the language barrier was handled in the field. Did the ethnographer learn the people’s language, and if so how well? If not, did the ethnographer only interview bilingual individuals, or was an interpreter used, and how did the interpretation process go? Typically, we learn

very little about these matters; translation is implicitly treated as unproblematic.

Chapter 4 discusses the colonial period. Ethnographers, Sturge claims, rarely delivered any knowledge that would be useful to maintaining colonial power, and thus the major impact of ethnography was in the homeland, where publications created public perceptions of colonized peoples (a function also played of course by translation in the narrow sense).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnographers worked to distinguish their publications from those of missionaries and military officers; writings by the latter reflected practical concerns, while the former were seeking recognition as scientists using data to test theoretical schemas. Earlier in the book, Sturge cites Malinowski's contrast between missionaries and ethnographers: the latter were "translating the native point of view to the European" while the former were engaged in "translating the white man's point of view to the native" (p. 5). Another contrast, I would add, is that in the colonial period it was the missionaries who were the main contributors to knowledge in matters linguistic, for unlike the ethnographers, they had no choice but to learn the languages well in order to preach and convert. Not only did they write the first grammars—as early as 1672, a French Jesuit wrote a 135-page grammar of Ojibwa, one of the Algonquian languages of central Canada (Nicolas, 1994)—but also they translated the scriptures into the languages of the colonized peoples and promoted literacy, using writing systems they devised for this purpose.

Chapter 5 looks at ethnography from the 1970s onward. Much of it is devoted to a very interesting discussion of the several ways in which the informants' words are processed by the ethnographer. In this period, the traditional anthropology of the previous chapter is sometimes compared to the realist novel, with its single authoritative voice. This voice describes the people's culture in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person: "it is sufficient for a man of the x lineage to know that another man is of the y lineage..." (p. 51). It struck me while reading Sturge's account that the stance of the traditional ethnographer in this respect is very different from that of many translators: the realist ethnographer was the "I"

of the publication and saw himself as the authority and font of knowledge, whereas translators commonly disappear behind the “I” of the source text writer and often see themselves as servants of that writer. Far from bowing to their informants, the realist ethnographers had tended to paraphrase what they were told, because they thought that only they saw the underlying meaning of what the “natives” were saying.

Sturge goes over several alternatives to the realist tradition. There is the confessional tale, where the ethnographer gives, in an introduction or separate chapter (perhaps comparable to a translator’s preface), a first-person account of the difficulties of the fieldwork: practical obstacles, personal culture shock, relationship to informants. Sturge notes that these confessions generally have little or nothing to say about translation problems. A development of this approach is “reflexive” ethnography. Here the emphasis is not on autobiography but on epistemological questions: the ethnographer as a “knower and as an arranger of knowledge” (p. 63). A danger here of course, as noted by Sturge (p. 98), is that the publication becomes more about the ethnographer than about the people whose lives are being described. General readers, unlike scholars, are more likely to be engaged by straightforward narratives than by insistence on the fact of mediation (telling readers the story of how the informants spoke to them and of how they went about retelling for the readers).

Then there is the dialogical approach. One ethnographer mentioned by Sturge published a dialogue with his informant, though it’s in English and nothing is made of the Arabic/English aspect of the actual situation. However at least the reader is made aware of how the ethnographic description was created through talking to members of the society. Most importantly, when an informant is quoted (even if in translation), there is then a voice present different from the ethnographer’s, and indeed the voice of a particular individual rather than a generalized “native.” Of course, the selection and editing of the informant’s words is under the control of the ethnographer.

Many ethnographers quote isolated SL words, lending an air of the exotic and pointing to their own knowledgeability, but not bringing the voices of individual people into the picture.

However, a few actually reproduce transcriptions of their informants' SL speech, along with translations thereof. Of course, too much of this may be problematic from the point of view of the ethnographer's publisher, who may worry about readers being put off by long passages in another language. A similar problem arises with the translations: if they are "thick" translations, with several alternative renderings and annotations (p. 80), this may make reading onerous. Interlinear glosses may be especially off-putting for readers other than linguists, though without them there is no way of knowing how close the translation is.

Sturge briefly discusses the recent trend to "ethnography at home," i.e., ethnography written by members of the observed culture, whether this be in the former colonies or in the former colonizing country (p. 87). Here the need for translation is avoided, though the ethnographer may not share the subculture/dialect of the subjects.

Chapter 6 concerns those ethnographers who specialize in "oral literature." This is perhaps the most interesting chapter from the point of view of TS, in that it discusses at length the problems of transcribing the oral performances of storytellers and then translating the stories into the publication language. Practitioners of this specialty *have* given thought to translation in the narrow sense; see for example the interesting chapter on transcription and translation by one of the authors Sturge cites (Finnegan, 1992, ch. 9). Recently, Sturge mentions, some SL communities such as American Indian bands have sponsored translations of their traditional tales, and in these cases the oral ethnographers have become accountable for their translations to the SL side.

A key moment in the study of oral literature in the U.S. came in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when Boas oversaw the publication, by the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), of a library of oral literature in a very large number of aboriginal languages. These volumes may include transcriptions, interlinear glosses, English translations, a grammar, a dictionary and explanatory anthropological notes. When I was a graduate student of linguistics in the early 1970s, I spent a summer on Indian reserves



on the northwest shore of Lake Superior working on the syntax of Ojibwa, and I recall that in analyzing the results, I drew for comparison purposes on the two thick volumes of Ojibwa texts that had been collected for the BAE in that same geographical area in 1903-5, with English and Ojibwa on facing pages. At the time, I saw the English side as simply an aid to reading the Ojibwa side; it never occurred to me to see the English translation as itself a worthy object of study. This was perhaps in part because the translations in the BAE series are very plain. Sturge makes an interesting distinction between translations having ethnographic intent (a story is translated for what it reveals to us about the people) from those having literary intent (the story is translated to create a literary work in the TL, or studied for its literary value). The BAE translations are purely ethnographic; the aesthetic aspects of the stories do not come through. One such aspect is storytelling performance, and Sturge gives an interesting example of a contemporary translation which attempts to capture some features of performance using typographical devices that bring out rhythm and pauses (p. 107).

With regard to the detailed linguistic glosses which are found in addition to translations in some volumes of the BAE series (Sturge gives a full-page reproduction on p. 104, and on p. 113-4, she discusses a more complex gloss than the one in the Malinowski example given earlier): to my knowledge no one in any field that uses them—linguistics, ethnography or TS—has ever made a study of glossing practices. For linguists, glosses are merely rough-and-ready indicators of the morphological and syntactic structures of the language under study, though the British linguist J.R. Firth wrote an article about the role of glosses in linguistic analysis and suggested that glossing ought to be studied because of the ease with which it can mislead about the source language (Firth, 1956).

Chapters 7 and 8 turn to Museum Studies. Sturge restricts herself to ethnographic museums, with science and other museums mentioned only in passing. She focuses on their role as the public face of anthropology (for museum-goers), as opposed to the scholarly activities that go on behind the scenes.

In museums, the “source text” (the culture represented) is “translated” principally by displays of artefacts, so that the “translation” is not linguistic. I thought the translation metaphor came close to breaking down here because the artefacts start out as entities in the source culture and then are literally moved (commonly after being stolen) to the country where the museum is, and at that point they themselves become the “translation.” (Perhaps there is a partial linguistic analogue in the copying of SL words directly into the target text without change.)

Artefacts are of course typically accompanied in museums by labels and explanatory texts, which are further “translations,” this time of the artefacts. Sturge discusses these labels at length, but not their translations (narrow sense) into other languages, because she restricts herself to museums in the English-speaking world which, she says, are unilingual. As it happens, that is not the case with many museums in English-speaking Canada, such as the Royal Ontario Museum, which Sturge has occasion to mention very briefly. The translation of labels and explanatory text, as well as of auditory aids for museum-goers, is a topic which might be worth pursuing.

Museologists apparently talk about museums as producing meaning through the “writing” and “reading” of artefact displays. Some even talk about the “syntax” of a display. Now while the ordering of artefacts is no doubt highly significant, it is hard to see what is added by using this linguistic metaphor. Not all metaphors are revealing, and even if museologists find this one useful, I think that we in TS would do well not to endorse it. We should affirm the distinctiveness of language as a way of producing meaning. It was not easy to tell, throughout the book, what Sturge’s attitude is to linguistic metaphors; sometimes she seemed to endorse them; sometimes to have serious doubts.

An interesting topic in museology is the experience of the visitor touring a museum. (This brought to mind the thought that TS should devote more attention to the experience of someone reading a translation.) There is a potential divergence between curators’ intentions and how visitors actually move around the displays and interpret them. An interesting issue is

whether the artefacts or the labels predominate. Since visitors can see the artefacts, they can make their own interpretations, which may differ from the ones offered in the accompanying text. This is rather different from translation, where typically readers cannot interpret the source text themselves even if it is available.

Chapter 8 takes two questions already discussed with regard to ethnographic publications and asks them again with regard to museums: whose voice is speaking in a museum, and how is the difference represented between the culture of origin of the artefacts and the culture of reception? Sturge provides a very interesting discussion of a museum in London which opened in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it addressed the working and lower-middle classes about the African colonies. Now in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is in addition addressing the African diaspora resident in London. As a result the artefacts have been re-labeled to “change the distribution of voices.” The text accompanying a Yoruba mask is reproduced on p. 170 and includes a photograph of its early 20<sup>th</sup> century maker (who is named, so that the mask is not seen as “typical” and timeless but as the product of a particular person at a particular time); the authors of the accompanying text (English and Nigerian anthropologists) are also named; there is a relevant proverb in Yoruba with an English translation; and there is a statement about the masks in English by a present-day Yoruba-speaker who lives in London. An interesting issue Sturge mentions is whether the labels in such a museum should be translated into the language of the relevant immigrant community.

To conclude, I should point out that in “translating” Sturge’s book through this review, I have focused on those parts that concern language and translation (in the narrow sense), and skipped over a good deal of her discussion of the pitfalls and power relations of intercultural dynamics. Also, since the book falls squarely into the “cultural studies” strand of TS, I should mention that the opaque writing style often encountered with this approach is not overly present here. Finally, it would be interesting to see an article by a TS scholar discussing the ethnographic tradition in non-English-speaking countries.

FINNEGAN, Ruth (1992). *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*. London and New York, Routledge.

FIRTH, J.R. (1956). "Linguistic analysis and translation." In *For Roman Jakobson: Essays on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*. Hague, Mouton, pp. 133-139.

NICOLAS, L. (1994). *L'algonquin au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Diane Daviault, dir. Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université du Québec.

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**Corinne Wecksteen et Ahmed El Kaladi, dirs. *La Traductologie dans tous ses états. Mélanges en l'honneur de Michel Ballard*. Arras, Artois Presses Université, 2007, 284 p.**

*La Traductologie dans tous ses états* est un volume d'articles offerts par ses amis et collègues à Michel Ballard, qui a décidé de partir à la retraite à la fin de l'année universitaire 2006-2007. Le titre, en jouant sur l'expression « être dans tous ses états », témoigne d'une part de l'émotion suscitée par le départ du célèbre traductologue, laissant « la traductologie orpheline d'un de ses plus ardents défenseurs et promoteurs » (« Avant-propos », p. 8.), et reflète la diversité des études traductologiques que Michel Ballard a pu inspirer. Les articles du volume, écrits par des auteurs de huit pays différents, abordent des sujets variés et consistent aussi bien en réflexions théoriques, études sur un corpus d'un aspect traductologique particulier ou encore en analyses de caractère linguistique. Si les éditeurs n'ont pas opéré de classement afin de permettre au lecteur de cheminer à travers l'ouvrage à sa guise, quelques lignes directrices se dégagent dans les thèmes abordés.

Quelques articles sont consacrés à des questions théoriques. Ainsi, celui de Claude Bocquet, intitulé « Traduire les textes nobles, traduire les textes ignobles : une seule ou deux méthodes? », qui revient sur le jugement de valeur selon lequel seule la traduction des textes littéraires serait noble car son objet est noble, jugement qui a poussé certains auteurs et