

"Presentation"

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Presentation

Paul F. Bandia et Georges L. Bastin

The encounter between the East and the West has generated a great deal of scholarship from various disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences, from a variety of perspectives having to do with ideology and culture, politics, and the economy, among others. The essays in this two-volume issue deal with East-West encounters from the perspective of translation and intercultural communication, expanding the East-West paradigm beyond its usual conceptualization of relations between Western and non-Western cultures to include relations between radically different cultures and traditions in encounters that can be local, national or global. These encounters may be between cultures of orality and cultures of writing, between minority and majority language cultures, between dominated and dominant entities, or between colonized and colonizing cultures. They are sometimes expressed in intercultural relations pertaining to gender, sexuality, (im)migration, or alternative artistic modes of expression. The encounters can also be viewed in terms of the tensions between the local and the global, between literacy and aboriginal forms of expression. Some of these encounters are horizontal, based on cultural exchanges between rival global cultures without the notable influence of power differential, while others are vertical, driven by the imbalance of power relations between the centre and the periphery of the global marketplace. The common thread that runs through these multiple encounters is the implied sense of radical difference in need of mediation through translation and related forms of transformation and re-enunciation. This broad conceptualization of the East-West paradigm accounts for current trends in contemporary history, which have rendered the paradigm somewhat problematic. In our globalized world, owing

to the movement of peoples and the relocation of cultures, myriads of encounters have occurred between diverse cultures, ethnicities and traditions, resulting in the rampant interpenetration of cultures. The East-West paradigm has therefore become more of an epistemological construct than a regional or geographical representation. It is hoped that the East-West paradigm can nudge translation research towards reconciling a mainly Eurocentric tradition and theories and practices from other non-Western cultures and societies. The East-West paradigm therefore provides the basis for mapping forms and concepts of translation and related forms of transformation from diverse cultures, in an attempt to explore the commensurability of translation practices and concepts across cultures.

In this encounter between the East and the West, there is deliberate emphasis on the various concepts of translation, adaptation, transformation, re-enunciation or rewriting developed in different parts of the globe, in an attempt to highlight how and what Western or mainstream translation theory can learn from these concepts. Questions are raised regarding the culture specificity of translation concepts. To what extent are these concepts rooted in specific cultural histories and practices and can they be understood across culture and language boundaries? There is an implied challenge here to the dominance of Western translation concepts and their uncritical adoption or application to other cultures. Translation plays an important role in the movement of texts across languages, cultures and media. This role becomes even more significant in the movement of ideas and cultural commodities across radically different language cultures. Given its mediating function, translation raises certain ethical issues regarding the cultural and symbolic representation of otherness, including the agency of power relations in asserting national and transnational identities. Vertical encounters, such as those between the Third World and the West or postcolonial societies and imperial powers, often involve the quest by minority cultures for representation in the global marketplace. It is therefore important to study the role of translation in the representation of these cultures in global languages and how translators and other language practitioners have met the rising challenges posed by this unique experience of East-West encounters.

The essays in these volumes cover a wide range of historical experiences and translational discourses and practices seen in the light of East-West encounters in various regions including Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Some are detailed historical accounts of East-West intercultural practices, while others confront translation concepts from the East with their counterpart from the West. A few others explore the tensions and ideological underpinnings of cultural exchanges between competing global cultures. There is a palpable desire to encourage dialogue between the differing translation concepts drawn from various traditions for their mutual benefit and ultimately in order to forge a more inclusive and comprehensive discourse on translation theory and practice.

In this volume, Ryan Fraser takes on screen translation or the practice of dubbing in film as a mode of intercultural appropriation or misappropriation in the context of East-West encounter. According to Fraser, Woody Allen's foray into cinema was marked by a clear case of Asian exploitation, when the American film industry icon deprived characters in a Japanese film of their original dialogue and made them speak Allen's own narrative that had little or nothing to do with the images on the screen. This attempt at turning a Japanese spy thriller into an American comedy dubbed *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* exploited Asian stereotypes for comedic effect in what amounts to a condescending appropriation of a Japanese film through the practice of dubbing. Although intercultural parody has always played on stereotypes for laughs, Allen's misappropriation is significant for what it tells us about the manipulation of the sound-image relationship in foreign-language dubbing and the role of screen translation in shaping our views of the other.

The Japanese *Tale of Genji* is generally acknowledged today as a literary masterpiece, and this is largely thanks to translation, which provides the means for nations, great and small, to promote their literature and culture on the world stage. Many cultures endowed with great literary traditions but with geographically limited languages often resort to translation in a global language for greater dissemination and recognition. Valerie Henitiuk discusses here the case of the *Tale of Genji* which was

introduced to the West through Suematsu's 1882 translation of the masterpiece. According to Henitiuk, Suematsu's main objective was to enhance Japan's political and cultural profile in the West. However, Suematsu's efforts met with limited success, as information on the masterpiece was sketchy and erroneous and Westerners were sceptical about the wealth of literature and culture being presented to them. It was not until 40 years later that another translation by Waley caught on in the West. Henitiuk's article throws light on the circumstances surrounding the production and reception of Suematsu's translation, and raises some interesting issues regarding the agency of the translator and the factors that determined the outcome of the masterpiece in the West in spite of its literary quality.

James St. André's article confronts Chinese conceptualization of translation practice with Western characterization of the practice. By looking at the influence of Buddhism and the translation practice of the late Qing era (1890-1911), St. André highlights the importance of collaborative translation and relay practices both as working methods and potential material for translation pedagogy. Collaborative translation involving small or large numbers of translators and relay translation through several "pivot" languages have been accounted for in Chinese translation history and given considerable attention in Chinese scholarship. Although these practices can also be historically accounted for in the West, they have been generally neglected in contemporary Translation Studies, which continue to view translation as the task of a lone individual. This view runs contrary to developments in the industry, such as the rising numbers of translation companies dependent upon collaborative work. St. André explores the apparent neglect of these translation strategies in Western Translation Studies, and argues convincingly for their inclusion in translation research and pedagogy.

Laurence Jay-Rayon aborde, elle aussi, une problématique peu étudiée, celle de l'esthétique de l'oralité dans les littératures africaines. Après un rapide état de la question de l'hybridité et de la diglossie, omniprésentes dans ces littératures, l'auteure montre comment l'esthétique de l'oralité est ancrée dans des pratiques socioculturelles et linguistiques et qu'elle peut constituer un geste

politique. C'est par l'examen de *Sardines*, le quatrième roman de l'auteur somalien d'expression anglaise, Nuruddin Farah, qu'elle nous fait écouter les marqueurs sonores. Elle va ensuite illustrer comment les schèmes de la poésie somalie peuvent s'actualiser dans un texte romanesque rédigé en langue véhiculaire pour proposer une réflexion autour de la réactivation, en traduction, des patrons sonores du texte. Plus précisément, l'objectif consistera à montrer de quelle manière la langue orale et ses composantes formelles traditionnelles informent l'écriture de l'auteur. Dans un second temps, une réflexion s'articulera autour de la réactivation de cette oralité dans son acception de « dimension sonore », que Jay-rayon propose d'envisager comme vecteur de signifiante, au sens bermanien du terme. À cette fin, elle examine le concept de traduction cratyléenne proposé par Ryan Fraser.

Himansu Mohapatra tackles a familiar theme in (post-) colonial translation, but with a major twist. He looks at the translation of *Chhama Athaguntha*, an Oriya novel published in 1902 and considered foundational in Indian and world literature, in order to debunk two fundamental assumptions regarding the translation of such texts. It is often assumed that the “translative turn” is best understood in terms of the latest translation in a series of translations of a work. However, Mohapatra argues the contrary and shows how one of the earliest translations of this classic, *The Stubble under the Cloven Hoof* by C.V.N. Das, provides the best indicator of a “translative turn.” The second assumption is that English translations of postcolonial texts follow a linguistic prescription, which often implies external manifestations of a marked or hybridized and chutnefied variety of English. Mohapatra shows how Das avoids this approach and yet produces an English translation that remains faithful to the spirit of the text by giving an Oriya inflection to its English retelling. In this way, Das manages to resist the temptation of flattening the novel's anti-English content. By holding in check a tendency towards “Englishing,” he respects the Oriya identity and alterity of the text while resisting universalist or global readings.

Le chapitre suivant nous fait pénétrer dans la modernité japonaise par l'entremise d'un penseur d'origine japonaise établi aux États-Unis depuis une vingtaine d'années, Naoki Sakai.

Bien qu'elle ne soit pas le centre exclusif de l'attention de Sakai, la traduction demeure une thématique de fond qui traverse l'ensemble de son œuvre, notamment *Translation and Subjectivity* (1997). Sa théorie de la traduction devient le site d'une déconstruction à la fois politique, philosophique et culturelle de la modernité (japonaise). Critique à l'égard des prétentions de domination de l'Ouest autant que des réflexes de mimétisme de la part de l'Est, Sakai inaugure la perspective d'un dialogue original entre l'Orient et l'Occident puisqu'il trouve une partie de son inspiration dans des élaborations européennes (en particulier, la pensée poststructuraliste française) tout en prenant pour objet la modernité japonaise. À partir des écrits de N. Sakai, Sathya Rao se livre à un examen critique de sa théorie de la traduction.

The sociology of translation has become an important research avenue for understanding translation phenomena within their cultural, political and ideological contexts. Sergey Tyulenev's article showcases a unique case where translation sociology is used to frame in a systemic fashion the encounter between Western Europe and eighteenth-century Russia. After a brief presentation of the main sociological theories applied to translation, Tyulenev shows a penchant for Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, which takes translation research beyond the tendency to study translators and focuses rather on translation itself. Luhmann's theory allows Tyulenev to view translation as a subsystem within an overall social system and thereby explore the social functions of translation. Luhmann's theory is based on a functionalist view of society, with the latter seen as a system of functionally interdependent components. In this framework, translation is considered as one of the subsystems located at the boundary of the system with the ability to separate the system from the environment and also to connect them. It is in the light of this positioning of translation that Tyulenev is able to describe in clear scientific terms the intercultural exchanges between eighteenth-century Russia and Western Europe. During this time, translation played a major role in Russia's desire to shed its Byzantine Orthodoxy for what was considered to be a more progressive Western culture. In terms of Luhmann's theory, Russia being a social system had chosen a section of its environment, namely modernized Western Europe, as a model to emulate.

Hence, translation became the medium for conveying Western European knowledge to Russia, as well as the gatekeeper for censoring or controlling literature written about Russia outside Russia or elsewhere in Europe. This article is a good example of horizontal East-West encounters where power imbalance is not the overriding determinant of the translation trajectory.

Voilà qui, si l'on peut dire, fait le tour des principales stratégies et des principaux concepts de traduction profondément ancrés dans des histoires et des pratiques culturelles diamétralement opposées. Il en ressort de nouvelles définitions grâce à un nouvel éclairage; il en résulte la possibilité d'une compréhension mutuelle, d'un dialogue enrichissant, au-delà des frontières, des préjugés et des idées reçues. S'il ne s'agit pas de « découvertes » (ce volume n'en a pas la prétention), il y est bel et bien question de « rencontres » qui ne font que confirmer la fonction médiatrice de la traduction, toute imbue d'une éthique de l'Autre et d'un pouvoir de construction identitaire nationale et transnationale.

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