

Chasing Ricoeur: in pursuit of the translational paradigm

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ABSTRACT

It was in the midst of negotiations leading up to the formation of the European Union that Paul Ricoeur published an article arguing for the adoption of translation as an ethical model for dealing with the political and cultural challenges facing the emerging international community. Twenty years later, his idea is gaining new currency among Translation Studies scholars, as broader conceptions of translation open the way for a fuller consideration of translation as a paradigm for interrogating other forms of intercultural encounter. Drawing on the work of scholars ranging from Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi to Robert Young and Salman Rushdie, this paper seeks to examine how translation has been used as a model for addressing cultural issues in recent studies and to explore how a more paradigmatic view of translation could help us to apply what has been learned from centuries of dialogue about the cultural negotiations demanded by textual translation to other non-textual transformative processes.

KEYWORDS: intercultural encounter, metaphor, migration, Paul Ricoeur, postcolonialism, translation.

Introduction

1992 was an important year in European history. It was the year the Treaty of Maastricht was signed, a year filled with negotiations and dialogue between nations and across borders as countries throughout the continent worked to ratify and bring into force the document that would eventually result in the creation of the European Union. It was also the year in which, in the midst of all this international discussion and activity, a brief journal article written by Paul Ricoeur first appeared, bearing the title ‘Quel éthos nouveau pour l’Europe?’¹ In it, the French philosopher addressed the growing need for new and unprecedented forms of governance to meet the challenges of the emerging political situation, itself without precedent. In order for any such union of countries to succeed, he insisted, it would be necessary to find ways of somehow moving beyond the institutions of the single nation-state without simply recreating those same structures at the supranational level. What was really at issue, in Ricoeur’s opinion, was identity; at the core, underlying all negotiation, was the question of how to bring together so many very different identities into one unified whole without devaluing or erasing long-held and cherished uniquenesses. “The problem”, he wrote, “is familiar enough. Taken as a whole it is a matter of combining ‘identity’ and ‘alterity’ at numerous levels that will need to be distinguished. What we most desperately lack are models of integration between these two poles” (1996:3-4).

As Ricoeur unfolded his argument, he carefully outlined the one model that he considered “perfectly suited for the situation of Europe” and its “irreducible pluralism which it is infinitely desirable to protect”, the one model he thought demonstrated the greatest potential for successfully meeting the newly emerging challenges: that model was translation (1996:4). Looking beyond its obvious ability to facilitate much-needed interlingual communication, Ricoeur recognized in translation a process necessarily resting on relationships of

¹ The English version of this article, ‘Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe’, was translated by Eileen Brennan and published in 1996.

interdependence, a process not concerned only with language, but one that also “entails requirements and assurances which extend all the way to the heart of the ethical and spiritual life of both individuals and peoples” (ibid.). It was the inherently relational and ideally mutually-edifying nature of this transformative process that led Ricoeur to argue for the adoption of translation as a model for intercultural exchange. “Above all”, he concluded,

at a truly spiritual level, it leads us to extend the spirit of translation to the relationship between the cultures themselves [...] In this sense we can speak of a *translation ethos* whose goal would be to repeat at the cultural and spiritual level the gesture of linguistic hospitality (1996:5; original format).

Two decades have now passed since Ricoeur’s article was first published and, although many things have changed in the intervening years, in some ways we find ourselves today in a strangely similar situation, posing many of the same questions that Ricoeur and his contemporaries did, only this time on a global rather than continental scale. The drastic increase in international interaction and population shift resulting from globalization, as well as the dramatic growth of noticeably multicultural cities and communities everywhere we turn – not to mention the intercontinental connections and cooperation both evidenced and necessitated by events such as recent revolutionary movements in the Middle East or the current global economic crisis – together mean that questions about integration and distinction, about identity and alterity, have never been more current in our world than they are today. And in this broader, global context of intercultural negotiation and exchange, there are those who have again taken up Ricoeur’s refrain, repeating the call for us to move beyond ideas of textuality, to look more closely at translation, and to consider the broader scope of what it has to offer to modern discussions of identity and its formation.

Edwin Gentzler, for example, in his book *Translation and Identity in the Americas*, emphasized the need for clearly focused attention on the close and necessary connection between these two phenomena, arguing that “translation constitutes one of the primary means by which culture is constructed and is therefore important to any study of cultural evolution and identity formation” (2008:2). In his own book on the subject, Michael Cronin went even further, insisting that the engagement of translation scholars in debates over identity politics is not merely important, but rather imperative. “In a world and in a century where identity has become one of the key sites of struggle”, he writes,

translation is particularly well situated to make a positive and enabling contribution to debates around the issue, a contribution which respects complexities of allegiance, while demonstrating the need for reciprocity and dialogue. [...] If identity has become a subject of much debate in our time, it is because violent conflicts are still with us and people die and are prepared to die as a result of identity-related issues. Translators and thinkers about translation cannot afford to ignore the obligation to engage with debates about how in our century we are to find ways to live together in our households and in our cities and in our world. If we fail to engage, then there will be no end to the grievous evils that lie ahead (2006:5).

Indeed, as intercultural contact and conflict become increasingly common not just between, but also within, the societies of our world and as the discourse surrounding these interactions grows ever more urgent in its tone, it seems there are a number of questions that translation scholars would be wise to consider and address: what exactly is the nature of this perceived

relationship between translation and identity? Why is it that a growing number of scholars have begun to follow Ricoeur in so insisting on its importance? And, most significantly of all, what insights can translation provide to us as we face the difficult reality of integrating those two contrasting poles – ‘identity’ and ‘alterity’ – in the situations we encounter every day?

Four approaches to translation and identity

At a time when national borders are more permeable than ever before due to migration and international travel on a previously unprecedented scale and when correlations between language, culture and geography are becoming ever more unpredictable, questions about identity seem to grow more complex every day. Once thought to be the naturally fixed result of one’s relation to a series of discrete and easily distinguishable categories – male versus female or black versus white, for example –, identity is now recognized as being a much more flexible and fluid concept than was previously assumed. Not only in Translation Studies, but across the social sciences more broadly, the commonly accepted understanding of identity has shifted definitively away from the idea of a fixed, ontological reality waiting to be recognized and toward that of an ever-changing process to be continually worked through; and as this shift has occurred, the increasing emphasis placed on identity’s essentially representational nature has also exposed its fundamental vulnerability to outside manipulation. In consequence, recent years have seen a notable increase in the number of studies and publications attending particularly to the concept of identity (see, for example, Driedger 1996; Bennett 1998; Gonzalez and Tolron 2006; or Hall 2007), with results that span the spectrum from highly theoretical treatises to deeply personal accounts, as disciplines ranging from women’s studies to sociology and from philosophy to conflict studies have all approached the topic in their turn.

Naturally, this shift in thinking has played out with different results in each discipline; in the field of Translation Studies, its primary effect has been to refocus our attention on the connection of translation to – or perhaps better the role of translation in – the formation and representation of identity, whether on a national, collective, or individual scale. This connection, however, is neither simple nor easy, and so any attempt to grapple with its complexity can only be aided by the variety of perspectives from which the issues can be approached and considered, each one contributing to our broad understanding in its own way.

To date, most of the works that have appeared addressing this problematic have made their approach from one of three closely related and yet still distinct angles. The first of these is a focus on the identity of the translator as revealed by way of the choices that he or she makes in foregrounding or backgrounding aspects of a text, whether consciously or unconsciously, in this way shaping the representations created therein. Examples of such a focus range from relatively early works like *The Translator’s Invisibility* (Venuti 1995) to the more recent collection of essays published under the title *Translating Selves: Experience and Identity Between Languages and Literatures* (Nikolaou and Kyritsi 2008), both of which examine in their way the person of the translator, a multilingual being in relation with the text and with the original author. A second angle of approach has been carved out by those producing pieces like Venuti’s ‘The Formation of Cultural Identities’ (1998) or Cronin’s aforementioned *Translation and Identity* (2006), books and articles which pay closer attention to the social impact of a translator’s choices, that is, to the ways in which translated texts, which are, after all, inherently partial representations, inform the perceptions and constructed realities of receptive audiences. The third group of writings to be considered are those that seek to highlight the ways that translations have been or can be used to negotiate and re-negotiate identity through self-translation or other subversive strategies. Sunny Singh’s ‘Writing in My

Own Foreign Language: Dilemmas of an Indian Writer in English' (2006) would be a classic example of this approach, as would Daniel Gagnon's 'Cross-Writing and Self-Translating: One Canadian/Quebec Experience' (2006).

All three of these approaches have proven to be both useful and insightful, shedding considerable light not only on the manner in which selective and strategic translation has impacted the formation and the perception of cultural identities the world over, serving in the process to help create and reinforce certain structures of power, but also on the ways that it can be used to reformulate these same identities and undermine these same power structures, serving in stark contrast as a tool of resistance.

More recently, however, a fourth general method of approach to the issue has emerged, one stemming largely from work being done in the area of postcolonial translation studies. This fourth method seems designed to respond much more directly to Ricoeur's original appeal, focusing as it does on the development of a translational model – a paradigm which can be used for examining and interrogating other processes of intercultural exchange and other transformative experiences, be they linguistically, culturally or socially disjunctive – and as such, it is deserving of particular attention.

In his writings on postcolonialism, Robert Young asserts that

nothing comes closer to the central activity and political dynamic of postcolonialism than the concept of translation. [...] As a practice, translation begins as a matter of intercultural communication, but it also always involves questions of power relations, and forms of domination. It cannot therefore avoid political issues, or questions about its own links to current forms of power. No act of translation takes place in an entirely neutral space of absolute equality. Someone is translating something or someone. Someone or something is being translated, transformed from a subject into an object (2003:140).

In these few lines, we find summed up the essence of this fourth approach, and we catch a brief glimpse of just what such a translational model or paradigm may allow us to do. While still beginning from the traditional conception of translation as a mode of facilitating intercultural communication, the notion of a translational paradigm pushes us to take a step back and to widen our view, not only to take into account the social and political context and impact of translation, but also to more broadly redefine our very object of study, to consider human beings, as well as texts, the potential objects of translation: "Someone is translating something or *someone*", Young wrote. "*Someone* or something is being translated" (ibid.; my own format).

In the introduction to Bassnett and Trivedi's *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, we read:

In our age of (the valorization of) migrancy, exile and diaspora, the word 'translation' seems to have come full circle and reverted from its figurative literary meaning of an interlingual transaction to its etymological physical meaning of locational disrapture; translation itself seems to have been translated back to its origins. As André Lefevere suggested, 'the time may have come to move beyond the word as such, to promote it to the realm of metaphor, so to speak, and leave it there' (Lefevere 1994:vii) (1999:13).

It is precisely this “promot[ion] to the realm of metaphor” that the translational paradigm seeks to achieve. Perhaps more than any of the first three options, it is this fourth approach to questions about translation and identity – this consideration of the subject from a less prototypical and more metaphorical or paradigmatic perspective – that has the greatest potential to deepen our understanding of the effects of other intercultural, transformative processes on the formation of identity; the greatest ability to strategically position translation scholars for better engaging with current interdisciplinary dialogues; and the greatest hope of moving us somewhat further down the road toward that ‘ethos of translation’ envisioned by Ricoeur.

The translational paradigm

Ricoeur described translation as a process essentially consisting in “the search for optimum commensurability between the distinctive resources of the receiving language and those of the original language” (1996:4). Though his belief in what he termed “the principle of universal translatability” never wavered – “Translation is de facto; translatability is de jure”, he insisted (ibid.) –, nowhere in his writing on the subject is there any assumption that one should ever be able to find easy equivalence between the “distinctive resources”, whether linguistic or conceptual, of varying languages and cultures. On the contrary, Ricoeur repeatedly underlined the challenges and difficulties posed by even the most apparently simple translation project, writing at length about the struggle of translation and the anguish of the translator in the face of trying to recognize and validate two vastly differing realities, while simultaneously attempting to reconcile them and bring them together in dialogue. Translation is a work of both remembering and mourning, he explained, of both salvaging what can be saved of a text and accepting what will inevitably be lost (Ricoeur 2006:3).

It was only this recognition of the full complexity of translation, its essentially multi-layered and multi-faceted nature, that allowed Ricoeur to perceive the connection and take the step that he did in his later work, moving from a prototypical to a paradigmatic view of translation. “It seems to me”, Ricoeur observed, “that translation sets us not only intellectual work, theoretical or practical, but also an ethical problem” (2006:23), and more than the linguistic or intellectual challenges posed, it was this ethical dimension of translation that Ricoeur began to see repeated in other situations where differing languages, differing cultures, and fundamentally differing ways of viewing the world are brought into contact with one another. “Confessions, religions”, for example, he queried,

are they not like languages that are foreign to one another, with their lexicon, their grammar, their rhetoric, their stylistics which we must *learn* in order to make our way into them? And is eucharistic hospitality not to be taken up with the same risks of translation-betrayal, but also with the same renunciation of the perfect translation? (Ricoeur 2006:23-24).

Thus in the difficult work of translation, in the intricate act and art of negotiating and mediating between two dramatically distinct sides, in the complex task of intentionally constructing some fragment of common ground for them to meet on, Ricoeur saw more than merely a linguistic endeavor. Instead, he saw a model, a paradigm worth studying, considering and learning from.

Though still today the work of developing this model has really only just begun, several examples of its application have emerged for our consideration, and, taken together, they can

help us to perceive more clearly some of the key characteristics of the proposed paradigm, as well as its still-largely-untapped potential. The first such example – the one which thus far has emerged most often and been most widely accepted – is the discussion of migration as translation. In fact, it is with this metaphor that Robert Young both begins and ends his “very short introduction” to *Postcolonialism* (2003), emphasizing the truth that, increasingly common as it is in our world today, migration remains a complex and trying experience, one that involves much more than simply the physical displacement of a person from one locale to another; it also challenges linguistic, cultural and social realities, often shaking a migrants’ very sense of self, leaving them searching for new ways of being in relation to the new situations that surround them. In the broadest sense, Young explains,

translation is a way of thinking about how languages, people and cultures are transformed as they move between different places. It can also be used more metaphorically, as a way of describing how the individual or the group can be transformed by changing their sense of their own place in society (2003:29).

The same line of reasoning can be traced through the writings of numerous other scholars, ranging from Anne Malena – who argues that “[m]igrants are translated beings in countless ways” (2003:9) – to Stuart Hall – who cites translation as a way of conceiving “identity formations which cut across and intersect natural frontiers” and broadly concludes that all migrants, forced as they are to come to terms with new cultures and surroundings while still bearing the traces of the traditions, languages and histories that first shaped them as individuals, “are irrevocably translated. [...] They must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them” (Hall 1992:310).

However, the idea of migration as an experience that translates people is perhaps most clearly expressed in the work of Salman Rushdie, who uses the metaphor to shed light on his own personal experience as a migrant. In *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Rushdie returns to this image again and again, underlining three significant disruptures experienced by the individual in the course of a migration, each with a lasting impact on identity and each with a clear parallel in translation. “A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption”, he writes,

He loses his place, he enters into an alien language, and he finds himself surrounded by beings whose social behaviour and codes are very unlike, and sometimes even offensive to, his own. And this is what makes migrants such important figures: because roots, language and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be a human being. The migrant, denied all three, is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human (Rushdie 1991:277-278).

Roots, language, and social norms. A physical displacement matched by a linguistic and also a social one. Here we can draw the parallels between migration and translation boldly, for these same three migratory disruptures can generally be said to characterize a translation as well: a text reproduced in a new setting, whether temporal, geographical or both, in a new language, and for a new audience, a new culture governed by different social norms and behaviours. And just like the migrant re-creating himself and his identity in the midst of a new situation, the translator is obliged to seek out new ways of re-creating the text in the midst of all this newness. In choosing to consider migration in light of a translational paradigm, in choosing to depict his own experience this way, referring to himself as a “translated” man – both bilingual and “borne across the world” (Rushdie 1991:17) –, Rushdie

invokes the voice of every translator who has ever reflected on the challenges of his or her practice, bringing all the debates about negotiating the space between the foreign and the familiar, the Self and the Other, to bear on his own discussion. By referencing translation as a model for understanding migration, Rushdie provides his readers with a rich source of new insight into the experience of the migrant.

Migration, however, is not the only intercultural and transformative experience that could be beneficially examined in this way, nor is it the only application of the translational paradigm to have appeared in the literature. A second example – the consideration of colonization as translation – can be found in Bassnett and Trivedi's *Post-Colonial Translation* (1999). They write:

Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or 'translations' of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate. [...] The metaphor of the colony as a translation, a copy of an original located elsewhere on the map, has been recognized (1999:4-5).

Two aspects of this metaphor are particularly interesting, the first being the focus placed on "the great Original". According to Bassnett and Trivedi's argument, the emergence of the very concept of an authoritative and unchanging original which holds sway over its translation coincided in European history with the initial period of colonial expansion, and so the parallel exaltation of an original text over its translation and of a European society over its colony is especially striking. Moreover, in addition to highlighting the linguistic and cultural clashes between colonizers and those they sought to colonize, Bassnett and Trivedi's formulation of the translational metaphor also boldly underlines the intentionality of both processes. Just as a translator intends to write a text that is comparable to an original, so too the colonizer held as his or her intentional goal the creation of a society that mimicked his or her own. Yet just as few, if any, translations ever attain equal status with an original, so too were the colonies condemned to be ever regarded as inferior to their European counterparts.

A close reading of works such as these quite quickly and clearly reveals that the concept of translation employed in the writing is far from a prototypical one; on the contrary, what is seen is translation used as a tool for the interpretive analysis of other transformative episodes in the human experience. However, despite being the two most common examples found in the literature to date, neither the discussion of colonization nor that of migration has been thoroughly threshed out or systematically explored in its relation to translation. To refer to these writings, then, as true applications of a translational paradigm is, in fact, something of an overstatement. Nonetheless, even from these initial forays into the subject matter, we can begin to form a clearer idea of what a translational paradigm might look like and what it might have to offer once more fully developed.

First of all, as we have already noted, a translational paradigm would allow us to more broadly redefine our object of study; while neither dismissing nor even really decentering translation's foundational focus on written texts, such a model would give us a way to look beyond these texts to also consider the human beings who write them and the cultural communities to which they belong as potential objects of translation. Secondly, the translational paradigm would provide us with a single framework within which to address and account for not only the linguistic, but also the contextual, cultural, and social disruptions experienced by so many today, helping us to view in a more comprehensive way the multi-faceted impact of these transformational episodes on a person's identity. Thirdly, the

translational paradigm would underline the intentionality, whether spoken or unspoken, acknowledged or unacknowledged, that plays a significant part in any asymmetrical or hierarchical intercultural exchange, giving us a new vantage point from which to address and reassess imbalances of power in the multicultural societies of a global world. Finally, such a paradigm would focus attention on the lasting effects of these transformational/translational processes on all who undergo them, reminding us once more that translation is never a merely reproductive process; instead, it is always productive, ever creating new and different translated texts, beings, or communities which, rather than being apparently 'faithful' copies of their originals, instead "underscore the hybridity that escapes colonial power, the cultural difference that the mimicry of colonial values is designed to erase, but only exaggerates" (Venuti 1998:172).

Determining the potential of the paradigm

Thus we can draw out the beginnings of a theoretical outline for the emergent translational paradigm. Any truly valid theory, however, must justify its continued use and development through its practical application, just as it was from practice that it drew its initial impetus. In the case of the translational paradigm, then, we must consider not only how the model may have been used in the past to enrich our understanding of the asymmetrical intercultural encounters seen above, but also how it could provide us with useful insight for addressing the challenges currently (or prospectively) faced in today's multicultural societies – for example, how it could help us to more fully understand the difficulties encountered by students from a minority language and culture who are forced into an educational system structured and governed by a majority language and culture very different from their own; how it could help us view in a more comprehensive manner the far-reaching effects of political and social upheavals catalyzed by increasing contact and communication between members of societies on opposite sides of the globe who think and speak and view the world from entirely different perspectives; how it could help us to mitigate religious disputes, as first suggested by Ricoeur himself (2006:23); how it could enable us to better mediate conflict of all sorts or to more genuinely hear the voice of the Other when he or she speaks. These are the sort of challenges faced in countless countries and contexts today, the transformational encounters that can change how an individual or group views not only the world around them, but also their own place and role within it, profoundly affecting their sense of identity. And these are precisely the sort of social situations for which Ricoeur realized we had need of an ethical model to guide us, helping us to effectively negotiate between similarity and difference and to productively integrate identity and alterity – the very challenges faced every day by the translators of written texts.

The extent to which the translational paradigm will truly be able to accomplish all that Ricoeur envisioned and hoped that it would can only be determined as it is carefully and strategically tested and tried in each of these and countless other similar situations. Clearly, though, a full exploration of even one of these examples would far exceed the limits of a paper such as this, and so we are obliged to leave their fuller discussion for another time and place.

Nonetheless, there is yet one more crucial question to be addressed in the process of evaluating the usefulness of the proposed paradigm, and it is to this question that I now turn our attention. For while a translational paradigm, developed and built on foundations laid by the assertions of scholars such as Bassnett and Trivedi, Rushdie and Young, may indeed have the potential to provide us with a new framework within which to examine and interrogate such identity-forming processes, in truth, new frameworks are really only ever useful to the

extent that they offer us not just new ways of looking at a problem, but also new strategies for envisioning potential solutions, or at least ameliorations, to the problematic situations considered. And it may turn out that this is where the greatest strength of the translational paradigm lies.

The key, I would suggest, is found in the central difference between Ricoeur's formulation of the model, with which we began, and that one employed by postcolonial translation scholars in the examinations of migration and colonization considered above. For Ricoeur, the beauty of the translational model lay in the fact that there is an interdependence between the languages involved in a translation project that really should leave no room for conceit, but only for mutual esteem and edification. "In this respect", Ricoeur stated,

the arrogant model of the 'remains of the Egyptians', which we find at one point in St Augustine, is not a worthy one. The model to be preferred is the more modest one proposed by von Humboldt, i.e. that of raising the distinctive spirit of his own language to the level of that of the foreign language, particularly when it is a matter of original productions which constitute a challenge for the receiving language. It is really a matter of living with the other in order to take that other to one's home as a guest (1996:5).

This more modest attitude is what Ricoeur referred to as "linguistic hospitality" (ibid.). This is that 'ethos of translation' that he dreamt of seeing extended to the spiritual and cultural level. "Ricoeur argues that good translations involve a crucial openness to the other", Richard Kearney explains,

Indeed he recommends that we be prepared to forfeit our native language's claim to self-sufficiency – which can sometimes go to extremes of nationalism and chauvinism – in order to 'host' (qua *hospes*) the 'foreign' (*hostis*). [...] Linguistic hospitality calls us to forgo the lure of omnipotence: the illusion of a total translation that would provide a perfect replica of the original. Instead it asks us to respect the fact that the two languages are not the same, nor exactly reducible the one to the other (2007:151; original format).

Forfeiting the claim to self-sufficiency, forgoing the lure of omnipotence, respecting the distinctiveness of the other: these are the hallmarks of Ricoeur's desired model. Yet in neither of the examples considered above, in neither the case of colonization nor in that of migration, is this the mindset evidenced. On the contrary, each case was marked in some way by asymmetry, by hierarchy, with the intentions of one side forcibly prevailing over the desires of the other. The idealized paradigm certainly does not match the too-often ugly realities of our world. So how are the two to be reconciled? If Ricoeur's translational paradigm does not reflect our reality directly, is there a way in which it can help us transform or repair the undesirable aspects of the reality we see?

If we were to extend the translational metaphor somewhat further toward its logical end, it could be argued that each transformative intercultural encounter should be considered a translational process, and translation, we know, though riddled with many challenges, is not in and of itself inherently problematic; instead, it can produce either positive or negative results depending on the way the translation project is conceived or structured and the specific practice and process employed in its execution. By the same token, it is not the fact of intercultural exchange that is somehow inherently problematic, but rather the asymmetrical

way in which too many encounters are structured that is flawed. And so, if in this new light we can look at the intercultural conflicts around us and see them as resulting from poorly structured translation projects, then we find we have a new perspective from which to examine these failings and to formulate better strategies for future undertakings.

In his insightful study of the differing translation practices of France and Germany in the Romantic era, Antoine Berman draws heavily on the complex concept of *Bildung*, defined as “a process of self-formation concerned with a ‘same’ unfolding itself to attain its full dimension” (1992:44). A triadic process, *Bildung* requires that individuals, already conscious of their own identities, not only come into contact with but truly experience and live something new and foreign – something other – to such a degree that they are able to step away and view themselves in a new way in relation to that other; they can then return to themselves, to that place where they formerly had been, but now as new people seeing the world and acting upon it differently than they would have previously. In the words of Martin Heidegger, “the being-with-itself of spirit requires a return to itself which, in turn, requires a being-outside-itself” (as quoted in Berman 1992:44).

This returning to Self is the key to true *Bildung*, that which distinguishes it from “the purely erratic and chaotic adventure where one loses oneself” (Berman 1992:48). In the same way, Berman argues that this return to Self is also the key to good translation, that which allows one language and culture to learn from another and grow in the process without surrendering its very identity to it. A good translational project, then, could be defined as one which is characterized by *Bildung*, one in which the meeting of the Self with the Other opens the way for a return to an enriched Self; a poor translational project, on the other hand, could be defined as one in which this connection to the Self is somehow lost and the cycle of *Bildung* is broken, the result being alienation.

This philosophical concept Berman has thus shown to be tightly bound up with both the reality of translation and that of personal growth and transformation, and as such, it has enormous potential for helping us better understand the effects of many cultural and transformative processes, allowing us to distinguish between that which characterizes life-enriching experiences of positive growth and that which marks the negative and degrading ones in which we lose some part of ourselves. And once this distinction is made, we can begin to look for ways to transform the latter into the former.

When applied to many of the asymmetrical intercultural encounters found to be problematic in both past and present – from colonization to migration to education to social reform – it becomes clear that what is lacking is attention to the third part of *Bildung*'s triadic process. Rather than seeking to ensure that the end result of the encounter is that true return to an enriched Self so necessary to the growth of an individual or the community of which they are a part, too often attention has been focused instead on directing those without power to that place where an external authority has determined they should end up – their so-called ‘proper’ place within the social hierarchy – with the result being an all-too-predictable alienation from the Self and often from the community as well. No translation project, however, is a fixed and immutable reality. By thoughtfully and strategically altering our practice to renew our focus on all three parts of *Bildung*'s triadic process, even the poorest of translational projects has the potential to be transformed for the better, changed from what Berman would deem a merely “superficial connection” between languages to that which he would recognize as constituting a “genuine relation to the Other” (1992:33). The principle of linguistic hospitality teaches us

to seek these genuine relations, not only between texts, but even more significantly between cultures and between people.

A translational paradigm, such as that one proposed by Ricoeur almost twenty years ago and now re-emerging in the work of contemporary scholars, is indeed something of great potential. It has the potential to help us better understand how identities are shaped and influenced. It has the potential to lead us toward a fuller understanding of intercultural tension and conflict. It has the potential to enable us to build stronger multicultural societies. It has the potential to help us learn to live together. In the end, what a translational paradigm can do is quietly point us toward strategic starting points in our struggle to further cultivate equality and respect for all, at every turn moving us a little closer to the realization of that 'ethos of translation' dreamt of by Ricoeur.

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