

van Doorslaer, Luc, Peter Flynn and Joep Leerssen. (eds) (2015) *Interconnecting Translation Studies and Imagology*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, vii+ 333 pp., ISBN 978-90-272-5860-1, Hardbound: £76.00.

Mental images of the other, or the foreign, are something we start creating from our earliest childhood, and by using different means. Stored deeply in our subconscious, in situations of conflict and political tension these images can rise up and be called up from our subconscious to further fuel hatred and perpetuate animosity. Showing how these images have been produced is the best way towards mutual understanding and acceptance and fostering a multicultural society. Identifying how images are constructed and maintained is one of the main concerns of imagological research. The study of Imagology includes the study of representation and national image-building in literary works, but has recently expanded in many other areas which are dealing with the emergence and continuation of “national characters” or national identifications (Beller and Leerssen 2007). One of the creators of Imagology Theory is among the editors of the volume under review that looks at ways to apply the imagological approach to the study of translation.

The editors of the book start their extensive introduction with a number of questions about the value of applying the imagological method to Translation Studies. In my mind, there is no doubt about the importance of imagological research, the outcomes of which can be used in the study of intercultural relations, where national stereotypes often play an essential role. Imagological research, especially in comparative literature, has produced many important studies of national identification and stereotypes. In their foundational survey of Imagology, Beller and Leerssen (2007) include a catalogue of the images of about 50 nations as represented in European literature and culture. Imagology tries to understand the discourse of representation, rather than a society. According to Leerssen, Imagology should study “the point of intersection between the text’s verbal (‘poetical’) and historical (‘ideological’) properties, between the text as verbal tissue and the text as social act” (1991:125). The introduction to the volume under review also provides a summary of Leerssen’s methodological apparatus for the imagological approach, explaining important concepts like: ethnotype or national character, commonplace, and moral valorization. The editors also discuss at length the impact of globalization discourse on the idea of the nation state.

It is not by chance that, since the turn of the century, Translation Studies scholars have been

interested in the role of translation in the image and identity building of different nations. Some of the most notable studies include those of Michael Cronin (1996) and Maria Tymoczko (1999), both dealing with the translation of national images of Ireland. On the other hand, Mette Rudvin (1994) argued that books from Norway, as a ‘small’ culture, tended to be selected for translation into English based on the prevailing image of their source culture, thus perpetuating stereotypical representations. One of the first to introduce Imagological Study as a methodological tool to be used within the scope of Translation Studies research was a scholar originating from the crossroad between Europe and Asia, Turkish native Nedret Kuran-Burçoğlu (1997, 2000). Building on Soenen’s (1997) observation on the impact of images of the other on the process of translation, in Kuran-Burçoğlu’s view, “...translation in turn may have an initiating, formative or transforming effect on the emerging or already existing image of the other” (2000:144-145). According to Kuran-Burçoğlu, the “image of the other” is impacted in three stages of the translation process: a) prior to translation, b) during translation and c) during reception.

This growing interest in the relationship between Imagology and Translation Studies may also be witnessed in two recent conferences on the interconnectedness of Imagology and Translation Studies. The International Conference “Transferring/Translating Cultural Images: Parallels between Stereotyping and Globalizing” was held at Yeditepe University in Istanbul on 16-17 September 2014. This conference was a follow-up conference to an earlier one in 2011 entitled “Low Countries Conference I: Translation and National Images”, and both of them brought together scholars of Translation Studies and Imagology.

According to van Doorslaer, Flynn and Leerssen, the online *Translation Studies Bibliography* lists 67 publications within TS explicitly connected to Imagology including “five books ... in the last decade” (2015:1-2), which suggests that the interest in image-building, and imagological approaches are very relevant for Translation Studies. The volume under review ambitiously sets out to make a meaningful addition to that number. *Interconnecting Translation Studies and Imagology* consists of a total of sixteen articles, which are divided into four parts, and one envoi. The four parts contain an average of four articles each and are divided according to broad topics related to: 1) the historical aspects of images in translation, 2) how the images of the other are constructed in translation, 3) the reconstruction of national images in translation, and 4) the role of translation in the construction and promotion of the self-image. The fifth and last part, entitled Envoi, consists of only one article by Raymond

van den Broeck. Unfortunately, the envoi is not directly related to the topic of the volume. It rather represents a personal narrative of translation scholar who witnessed the development of the discipline working alongside James Holmes and Itamer Evan-Zohar. The book also has a useful index of names and an index of concepts.

The imagological model has been criticized for “relying on national and cultural ‘containers’ and the existence of separate ‘national’ literatures” (Perner 2013:31) and its “Eurocentric bias” (Perner 2013:32). This opens up the question on the representation of the marginalized within mainstream national discourse. Although Imagological Theory has also been broadly criticized due to its Eurocentricism, for all its noteworthy contributions, this book yet again fails to offer a broader perspective. All of the sixteen articles included in the volume are concerned with the images of only European nations. Even more, the articles are mainly focused on a selection of European national images, mainly British (which appears as one of the languages in the translation combinations in nine of the articles) and Dutch (which appears as one of the languages in the translation combinations in six of the articles), less so Spanish, Italian and German, with only one article dedicated to Romanian, Estonian, and Croatian/Serbian respectively.

The main goal of Imagology is to identify the role of literature in the continuous process of creating new images about the other and the self, in this way determining the culture we belong to. Very often, for example, especially with lesser known languages and literatures, the translator is involved closely in the selection of the text for translation, and is not only the expert on the source language, but also the expert on the source culture and literature.

Recently, the relationship between Imagology and Translation Studies has been broadened from literary texts to journalism (van Doorslaer 2010), to the role of the translator as mediator (Sundaram 2011), and other areas. Only four of the articles in this volume make an exception from the usual focus of imagology on literary translations, and are instead concerned with media translations, namely translation of films (Italianness in US and UK films) and in newspapers (*El Pais English Edition*, *La Stampa* and *The Times*).

Although the term ‘image’ has a number of different meanings in the study of visual arts, and for this reason ‘imagology’ has been avoided by visual arts scholars, the “approach is valuable in the study of visual arts” (Weststeijn 2007:452). One of the most common applications of this approach to the analysis of stereotypical images has been the use the

concept of ‘the gaze’, which examines the ‘objectification’ of the depicted other. Recently the visual expression of national or regional identities has been viewed in the area of paintings and exhibitions of artworks, and the use of cartoons and caricatures in the press (Kuran-Burçoğlu 2009; Moyle 2004). For O’Sullivan (2005, 2011), one of the new aspects brought to imagology from children’s literature is the aspect of the visual:

merging of picturebook research with imagology, to examine images of nations, cultures and ethnic groups from a double perspective: the notional representations of such groups formed by the imagination (the subject of imagology) and how they are expressed in the material images of the picturebook (O’Sullivan 2011:11).

Although O’Sullivan is included in this volume, her article analyses Englishness in German translations of *Alice in Wonderland* looking at the paratext. In this or other volumes on Translation Studies and Imagology, little has been written on the use of imagological approaches to visual narratives in literary works.

In summary, this book offers a meaningful starting point for looking into the cross-section of imagology and translation, and as the editors state in the introduction, this volume “can hopefully serve as an initial attempt at an ‘archeology’ ... [of] images in and through translation” (2015:9). However, it remains to be followed by subsequent volumes that will lead innovative attempts to broaden the scope of research of image building and translation to other genres and other geographical areas and languages, as well as the images of the marginalized groups within broad national images.

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