

Translation Studies Beyond the Postcolony, edited by Kobus Marais and Ilse Feinauer, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 381 pp., ISBN 978-1-4438-9979-6, UK £68.99.

There have been numerous links drawn between Translation Studies and postcolonial theory, following pioneering works such as Cheyfitz (1991), Niranjana (1992) and Basnett and Trivedi's edited volume (1999). Postcolonial theory urges a focus on the European colonisation of Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific, and its historical consequences – especially in terms of power relations, culture and discourse, hence its interest to Translation Studies scholars. The fact that this volume does not feel the need to define 'postcolonial' in its introduction hints at how widespread such thinking has become. The use of 'postcolony' in this volume's title, however – a term coined by the Cameroonian theorist Achille Mbembe – indicates the putative aim of the book: to shift the focus from 'the postcolonial' as a theoretical basis, to 'the postcolony' as a unit of analysis. The 'postcolony', as understood in this volume, is a state existing within elements of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial temporalities simultaneously, thus avoiding the perceived sequential historical movement from colonialism to independence implied by the term '*post-colonialism*.' Such thinking apparently moves beyond the constraints and orthodoxies of postcolonial theory, which is not adequate to describe and analyse the complexities of life in the contemporary world.

Declarations that a theoretical framework has entirely outlived its usefulness are often exaggeration, and so it proves with this volume, which – with a few exceptions – actually works firmly within the boundaries of 'postcolonial theory.' What the volume taken as a whole seems to argue against is a version of postcolonial theory that understands 'coloniser' and 'colonised' as diametrically opposed sides of a binary, and that reduces every aspect of analysis to colonial history at the expense of understanding the actual lived experiences of the contemporary world. In fact, much contemporary postcolonial theory – in studies of Literature or wider Cultural Studies at least – analyses many kinds of societal power relations in (ex-)colonies, not only (European) colonisers vs. (non-European) colonised peoples. Nevertheless, this volume's focus on the material conditions of countries and cultures that are marked by, but not entirely defined by, European colonialism is certainly welcome.

The perhaps less-than-rigorous argument of the volume as a whole is replicated in its uneven structure. Divided into sections on 'Africa', 'the Global South' and 'the Global North' – terms which arguably repeat the very 'postcolonial' binaries the volume positions itself as

arguing against – the number of essays in each section varies wildly, and several of the essays would fit just as well into one section as another.

As with many works on Translation Studies and postcolonial theory, the focus here is largely on literature. Serena Talento's essay on translations from Swahili during British colonial rule fruitfully engages with Pascale Casanova's important work on comparative literature, *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), to suggest how translation can be understood not only as a productive force, but can also emphasise silence and censorship – which Talento conceptualises as 'deconsecration.' Alamin Mazrui's essay also focuses on the Swahili context, examining Cold War translations of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Maxim Gorky's *Mother*, backed by the CIA and the USSR's 'Department of Progress' respectively. Mazrui's essay argues that the novel's plots have similarities to historical events in post-independence Kenya – an interesting argument, but one that seems remote from the apparent subject of the essay, how neo-colonial power structures are enforced by state-sponsored translations. Chris Thurman's 'Multilingual Shakespeare' discusses various stagings of Shakespeare plays in South Africa and Germany, particularly plays or stagings focusing on issues of racial representation. As interesting as Thurman's observations and examples are for scholars of Shakespeare and race, or larger questions of race in drama performances, it seems the only reason for focussing on Germany – South Africa is discussed far less – is that Thurman visited there recently. It's unclear what the wider significance of the choice of examples is, for either Translation Studies or postcolonial theory. This is a shame as Germany is uniquely placed in terms of postcolonial theory, given that it never built up an empire to the extent other western European nations did, and that Germany was itself the midpoint between the two Cold War era 'pseudo-empires'. The differences between 'High' and 'Low' German, and the continuing perceived differences between 'West' and 'East' Germans, also mean that German as a target language offers interesting possibilities for translators interested in language and power relations. Thurman touches on these ideas, but only briefly.

Two other literature-focussed essays both discuss the translation of novels from Africa. Amarilis Achieta and Fernanda Alencar Pereira's 'Searching for a Mouth with which to Tell the Story' discusses the translation of Nigerian novels into Brazilian Portuguese, particularly Chinua Achebe's epochal *Things Fall Apart* (1959). Achieta and Alencar Pereira diagnose a domesticating strategy that damages the complexity of Achebe's English, which enacts a kind of 'translation' in the original through its use of calques and figures of speech from Igbo.

Intriguingly, the authors link Achebe's style to the Brazilian *Antropofagia* movement. However, as with Thurman's essay, there's little explanation of the importance of the Brazilian context for wider discussions. Chloe Signès' 'Beyond the Postcolonial Reading' looks at the translation of Francophone African novels in Spain, and reaches similar conclusions to Achieta and Alencar Pereira, recognising widespread, problematic domesticating translation practices, not least in paratexts. However, Signès offers more theoretical justification than most contributors to this book for thinking beyond the terms of 'postcolonialism' as commonly accepted. Ideas such as Homi Bhabha's (1994) conceptions of hybridity and a 'third space', she argues are "no longer an end in themselves but have become starting points" for both critics and, crucially, writers, translators and publishers themselves (Signès 2017: 329) – meaning many of the arguments of 'postcolonialism' can now be taken for granted. How true this remains for translation practice in general, or even Translation Studies as a discipline, is a question that could be pursued in future work.

The final discussion of literary translation comes from none other than Maria Tymoczko, whose fascinating essay discusses the importance of translation in three examples of postcolonial nation-building: the USA, Hispanophone America and Ireland/Northern Ireland. Tymoczko's essay is uneven – it seems unusual to discuss of the drafting of the US Declaration of Independence alongside Irish poet Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf*, given that one is a political-legal document and one is a poem. Additionally, the section on Hispanophone America is much shorter than the other two. However, the discussion of the USA as a 'postcolonial' nation is important. Postcolonial scholars of History or Literature have rarely discussed the USA, except as an imperial power itself. But Tymoczko convincingly links the US Civil War and its attendant debate about slavery to the foundation of the nation itself, arguing that postcolonial nations – nations formed in the aftermath of colonialism – often retain some of the worst features of the colonising power for many decades after – slavery, a Church in a position of undue power and a persecuted religious minority in Tymoczko's examples. Translation is, Tymoczko shows, central to the retention of such features.

There are three further essays focussing on text-based examples. Tania Hernandez's paper on Hispanophone editions of French newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique* is laudably detailed but does not justify the wider importance of its choice of examples. Adrián Fuentes-Luque focusses on Nollywood, Nigeria's huge (and rapidly expanding) film industry. Fuentes-Luque makes a convincing case that Nollywood is worth studying, given its cultural importance for

Nigeria and the diaspora – and the sheer number of films produced. Translation however is only discussed very briefly in the paper, which positions it more as an introduction to Nollywood, and a call for further study rather than a critical intervention itself. This paper is followed by ‘Reclaiming Humanness in Bible Translation Performance’ by Jacobus Naudé, Cynthia Miller-Naudé and Tshokolo Makutoane. Bible translation has been *the* central question of translation theory for scholars ranging from St Jerome to Eugene Nida, but Naudé, Miller-Naudé and Makutoane have almost certainly found a new angle. Their dizzyingly eclectic paper – the Dalai Lama and Lithuanian-French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas are quoted in consecutive paragraphs – argues that, in an era of critical ‘posthumanism’ and issues ranging from the worldwide financial crash to HIV/AIDS, many people in Africa have lost their ‘humanness.’ The solution is argued to be the collective performance of Bible verses relating to happiness, that have been translated into local African languages in such a way as to maximise their potential for recitation. The paper is practically vertigo-inducing in the amount of different ideas it contains, and yet still feels under-theorised – it’s not actually clear what theoretical version of ‘humanness’ the authors are working with. It also seems difficult to believe that the authors are actually suggesting that collective performance of Bible verses alone will help reverse some of the damage caused by, for example, Ebola. From a Translation Studies perspective, the paper unfortunately falls into the trope of simply listing different translations of example texts, without analysing the effects of differing translation choices in detail.

A slightly curious feature of the volume is that two of the three sections end with ‘responses’ from notable experts in the field, Paul Bandia on ‘Africa’ and Reine Meylaerts on ‘The Global North.’ These ‘responses’ serve as reflections on some of the themes brought up in the previous section, yet they seem to act predominantly as chances for the authors to point out the flaws in the preceding section’s papers. Granted, they do give praise too and point out areas where the discussion could be extended – but both are more critical than discursive. The responses seem to undermine the contributions of the other authors and even the structure and argument of the volume as a whole – not least because it implies that one section of the book, ‘The Global South’, does not need further discussion. Given that this section includes papers discussing Canada and the USA, the book suggests an unwillingness to interrogate its own terms – unusual given its provocative use of the term ‘postcolony.’

There are a further three papers in the book which take the discussion to areas untouched by other contributors, as all three essentially ask for a redefinition of Translation Studies.

Caroline Mangerel's 'Translating Silence' focusses on Canada, a country often discussed as unproblematically 'postcolonial' in Translation Studies, largely through focus on Quebec (for example, in some of Sherry Simon's work). Mangerel instead urges a welcome focus on Canada's Aboriginal (her term) communities. She discusses linguistic translation briefly, and largely focusses on the sharing of knowledge between disciplines, for example between Medicine and Law, as a form of Jakobson's 'intersemiotic translation'. She asks not only how knowledge exists within such interdisciplinary 'translation zones', but also how such knowledge transfer includes or excludes indigenous communities. The paper is an invitation to further research on how indigenous communities can be included in different forms of translational knowledge rather than a set of answers, but it throws down a gauntlet that should no doubt be picked up by other researchers.

Arguably more innovative still are the contributions of Kobus Marais and Holger Siever, which also genuinely move beyond traditional postcolonial theory. Marais' 'We Have Never Been Un(der)developed' looks at the links between translation and 'development', not only in the sense of infrastructure and economics, but also as a biological function. Marais' focus on biosemiotics expands the remit of Translation Studies – not simply by going beyond language, but by going beyond humans: biosemiotics potentially includes all lifeforms. Given the ambition of Marais' argument, it's strange that the essay ends with an extremely cursory discussion of the iconography used by the South African University of the Free State during their graduation ceremonies. This section feels at odds with the subject of the rest of the paper, and the essay would still have offered a clear enough intervention in Translation Studies without its inclusion. Likewise, Siever's essay clears new theoretical pathways but does not always directly address the concerns of this volume. Siever argues for cultures to be understood through fractals, patterns that repeat on micro and macro scales, so that, for example, a city in a postcolony can be both 'central' and 'marginal' at once. Using concepts such as hypermodernity, world-systems theory and "the difference between life-time and world-time", Siever argues that translation is not a process, but a way of being in the contemporary world. Translation Studies, therefore, would effectively need to become a specialised branch of Sociology. As interesting as Siever's argument is, it is problematic that he seems at points to rely on the very terms he aims to deconstruct: for example, he argues against binaries but posits a clear difference between the 'then' of the Cold War and 'now.' He also discusses the concept of the postcolony in a frustratingly cursory fashion.

Nevertheless, Siever's essay, alongside others in this volume, effectively argues for a total redefinition of our discipline, given the realities of the contemporary (postcolonial) world. This volume would have worked equally well had it been titled 'The Postcolony Beyond Translation Studies.' While the essays collected here have varying degrees of success in achieving their aims, the volume as a whole is certainly provocative, and points towards interesting future directions for research in Translation Studies and other fields of scholarship.

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