

Cronin, Michael (2017) *Eco-Translation Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene*, London and New York: Routledge, 178pp., ISBN 9781315689357, £30.99.

In my search for recently published books in the field of Translation Studies, I found one publication in which three words of the title took my attention: *Eco-Translation Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene* by Professor Michael Cronin. Published by Routledge under the series New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies, this work is well placed to address the changing and emerging needs of Translation Studies as a discipline and field of inquiry about the praxes of translation. For while the first and the last terms of the book title seem human-effected and the middle term is the system in which the other two exist, after reading this book I felt that all three of them are interconnected and mutually inclusive.

In the introductory chapter, **Earthlings**, Cronin's argument concerning the aims of the book is clear. Cronin states that translation - as a body of ideas and a set of practices - is central for any serious or sustained attempt to think about this interconnectedness and vulnerability in the age of human-induced climate change (Cronin 2017, p.1). As, according to Cronin, translation is an apparatus which creates a space for itself and for others in which "all" can survive in an ecologically imbalanced world, he defines eco-translation as *all forms of translation thinking and practice that knowingly engage with the challenges of human-induced environmental change* (Cronin 2017, p.2). Human activities and their effects as major factors for changing climate and environment are mutually inclusive and thus cannot be isolated from one another. For this reason, Cronin argues, translations and the translators are also as much interlaced with each other along with the physical environments where the following changes are induced: *Food security, climate justice, biodiversity loss, water depletion, energy security, linguicide, eco-migration, resource conflicts, global monocultures are some of the issues that will be at the heart of environmental debates in the twenty-first century and that will need to be addressed by scholars and practitioners of translation alike* (Cronin, 2017, p.3). This commentary suggests that Translation Studies scholars should be attentive towards the environmental changes caused by human beings and explore translation and its activities contributing to the changes and their effects. In this respect, Cronin's concerns seem to echo Anton Chekhov's lines in *Uncle Vanya*, "Man is endowed with reason and the power to create, so that he may increase that which has

been given him, but until now he has not created, but demolished. The forests are disappearing, the rivers are running dry, the game is exterminated, the climate is spoiled, and the earth becomes poorer and uglier every day” (Chekhov 1897). As the ecological situation of the world is worse now than it was in 1897, reading Cronin’s book re-creates engagement with an environmental angst which recognizes that disasters are in effect man-made and thus invites its readers to understand translation and its activities from ecological perspectives.

Chapter One of Cronin’s work, titled “**Paying Attention**” studies the changing ecological circumstances to be considered when one thinks about language, culture and translation. Cronin begins with a discussion on the meanings of ‘anthropocene’ to then investigate the present status of humanity and how it intertwines with the geological conditions. Cronin emphasizes the importance of paying attention to translation as a process of sociocultural forces in the context of political ecological conditions as well as itself as a ‘product.’ As Cronin rightly points out, “*translation as a global activity in the age of the Anthropocene must be apprehended in the specificity of its impacts in different locations over time* (p.12). After identifying three potential principles underlying translation ecology - place, resilience, relatedness - Cronin has a relevant question to ask: why translators may deny the relatedness of these three principles in relation to their desire to emphasize the value or distinctness of their profession (p.14). As Cronin believes that the understanding of a particular place can rescue us - or can help us survive - in the digital global context, a more constructive understanding of resilience in contexts of language and translation is a more helpful way by which we – and translators – can cope with the pressures of new translations, new accommodations and new ways of rendering. This understanding can enable us to use language to face the challenges of such relatedness (p19). Bearing relatedness in mind, we can then focus more on the inter-semiotic communication in translation, particularly in an age where translation plays a huge role in this technologically driven information-loaded world. In this chapter, Cronin makes an appeal to scholars to make the means or the processes of translation more conspicuous while considering translation as a form of “energy” that has the capability to transform and preserve the human induced ecological environment (p.34).

In the next chapter titled “**Eating our Words**”, Cronin deals with the study of translation, language and interrelationship between human beings and their food systems. At the age of

globalization and anthropocene, where movement of human beings and their languages is a must, Cronin explores the means, distribution and consumption of food by humans in a multilingual world in which translation plays an integral part. As people migrate, their food habits - and foods specific to particular communities - also cross various boundaries to be made available outside and elsewhere. As pointed out by Cronin, the availability of food means not only the movement of a concrete item and its associated languages but also the ways by which it is manufactured, distributed and consumed. As a recognition of a new translation ecology, this chapter focusses on intra-lingual translation, using examples from Oliver's cook books as a case study. The chapter examines the logic of industrialized food production and aligns this with the ever-increasing demands for translation, more food; and the demand for more "words" (p.4).

The third chapter is "**Translating the Animals**" which covers how all species of the earth depend on one another and how human activities are affecting the eco-system as one result of which is a loss of habitat. While earlier volcanic eruptions, natural climate shifts were reasons for the loss of species in this century, the human has become a geological agent to induce the drastic environmental changes. In this context of species loss, Cronin looks to translation for a solution and explores how the discipline is to be modified by going away from Human Exceptionalism to consider, instead, the symbolic nature of communication across the entities for ecological survival. To do, requires us to re-examine the disciplinary tools of Translation Studies as an inter-discipline well-placed to tackle changing disciplinary environments as one way of engaging with planetary futurity as a guide to the priorities of the present (p.92).

The significance of technology and its effect on ecological atmosphere is the focus of the fourth chapter titled the "**Great Transition**". With contemporary translation practices becoming more technologically driven and energy dependent, this chapter draws our attention towards the unsustainable energy resources which have accelerated the translation activities. This chapter thus probes whether shift from high-tech to low-tech translation practice is viable in view of the energy use, resource availability and the positions of translators. Using a number of case studies, Cronin searches for alternative models of knowledge organization in relation to translation and technology which can protect the eco-system.

The study of Eco-translation in the present era would be incomplete without addressing the issues concerning travel, translation and ecology, the subject matter of the fifth chapter of the book: “**Language Worlds**”. As we no longer live in a monolingual mono-cultural world where unity is of concern, we find ourselves in a time when languages are becoming more open-ended and people themselves more multilingual. As pointed out by Cronin, translation participates in the transaction of these language speakers – and in many ways, one can consider translation as a trigger to cause the reciprocal relationship. But this relationship is never equal as we are having major global languages and minority languages. The chapter examines the representation of various minority languages in travel accounts and the role that translation plays there.

In today’s globalized and techno-centric world, ecology has been the cynosure of all eyes and for this reason, the book is a well-timed publication from which to consider and study translation in relation to our ecological conditions. This work gives a new perspective to the study of translation in relation to the ecological conditions at present. Interestingly this book has put more of its emphasis on intra-lingual and inter-semiotic translation rather than on practices of inter-lingual translation. This emphasis is intentional on the part of Cronin - he does this as the first two of Jakobsonian tripartite is neglected in the field of Translation Studies (p.42). In my view, Cronin’s work makes us aware of the gravity of our ecological situation and provides ways to think about translation as a form of energy with the capacity to preserve the ecological environments and sites affected due to human activities. The book thus will attract the attention of scholars in Translation Studies as well as in Environmental Sciences and the sciences related to the study of eco-system, the survival of the species and energy resources. Reading this book will enlighten readers and raise awareness of eco-translation as a concept in general and draws timely attention to the visibility and viability of translation in particular.

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