
Gentzler, Edwin. *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2008, 187 p.

Edwin Gentzler's book *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory* is a thorough examination

of how language and translation can alter cultures and, more importantly, the identities within. The book is divided into five sections: "Multiculturalism in the United States," "Feminism and Theater in (Quebec) Canada," "Cannibalism in Brazil," "The Fictional Turn in Latin America," and "Border Writing and the Caribbean," all drawing upon Gentzler's own studies, as well as many other schol-

ars including Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Haroldo de Campos, and Jorge Luis Borges. Stressing the importance of cultural studies, postcolonial studies, translation studies, and psychological studies, Gentzler's purpose in this book is to highlight those minorities (ethnic and linguistic) most often affected by translation in order to develop a greater understanding and acceptance of them in this era of globalization and conflict.

In his first two sections, Gentzler focuses on North America, comparing translation studies in the United States and Canada. While the U.S. is a "melting pot" of cultures, it is officially monolingual; the Canadian government of Quebec, in contrast, has declared the province officially bilingual. Through historical studies, Gentzler shows how both areas were formed by dominant forces, thus taking away traditional language and cultures of those governed. Unresolved issues in the U.S. remain mainly racial and ethnic, whereas in Quebec the tension is between the English and French speakers. For the U.S. case study, he draws upon the experiences of another translation scholar, Jacques Der-

rida (a Jewish Franco-Maghrebian) to highlight the psycho- and socio-pathological trauma which minorities endure as a result of the suppression of their cultures, traditions, and identities. By stressing the importance of a multicultural and multilingual culture, Gentzler also presents us with the notion that cultural conflicts can occur within the language. For example, while many consider that French Canadians speak the traditional French of France, in reality, the people of Quebec struggle to differentiate their language through blending tradition French, English, and Canadian street French into a language called *joual*. While residents of Quebec might feel burdened by their constant need for translation, Canadian society often forgets the groups that are faced with translation struggles beyond the national language barrier. By studying the increasing feminization of translation in Canada, it is apparent that women translators are coming to the forefront, making the female perspective more apparent in a male-dominated society. Recognizing these "minorities" who translate everyday in order to integrate themselves into society, Gentzler

sees the importance of translation as a means to rewrite gender, ethnic, and cultural roles to increase cultural understanding. Most importantly, Gentzler uses Walter Benjamin's theory of translation as a "maturing process," a way in which individual nations and people can survive through increased communication.

As North America is faced with issues of language, cultural, and gender relations established from the first settlers, the third and fourth sections of this study discuss how Brazil and Latin America question how much colonization has influenced their identity. Starting with Brazil, Gentzler studies how contemporary writers such as Haroldo de Campos use "cannibalism" as a metaphor for preserving traditional Brazilian culture by "devouring" or re-translating it, thus preserving the positive aspects with new European ideas. While some criticize the "cannibalistic" translation as an inability to achieve cultural independence, Gentzler portrays the Brazilians' use of translation as a means to re-evaluate or re-construct the country's identity in a positive light. By contrast, Spanish-speaking Latin America is not

only faced with evident colonial residue, but also a large mixing of indigenous cultures and languages that divide the continent's people. Gentzler finds translation studies in Latin America to be important not for technical reasons, but for understanding one's past, thus aiding to discover a true self amidst cultural assimilation. Using the three well known authors Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa, the author demonstrates how their fiction represents how South America depends on translation in order to interact. Gentzler sees the blending of identities within all languages as a reflection of Benjamin's studies of interconnectedness. Just as no translation is unique or more original, neither is a single language. Each text is an addition to the previous, and each language and culture are joined to those translations. As it evolves, affirms Gentzler, translation should be considered a creative act that serves to identify a particular country's independent personality.

Though the nation-states Gentzler discusses are faced with translation issues from within, the author leaves "in between"

places for his last chapter. Focusing on authors living on the U.S.-Mexican border and in the Caribbean, Gentzler shows how subgroups have been forced into silence by their dominant neighbors. Constantly forced to switch languages, they became victims of an invisible line, which attempts to define who they are. Continuing to speak their preferred language in the homes, translation in the border areas is used as a source of revival and resistance, thus proving that it can be used to preserve cultures. In these border zones, translation is a means of defense, a refusal to forget the past while facing a force that attempts to create a "nation." Like Borges or García Márquez in Latin America, in section five Gentzler questions identities of "nations" that only exist on paper, while authentic nations maintain their identities within. Regardless of the lines drawn on a map, borders do not truly exist today given the ways that technology and territories,

cultures, and people constantly overlap their constructed border, thus producing what we call today "hyphenated identities."

In *Translation and Identity*, Gentzler steers clear of technical formulas of translation and stresses its affect on a given society. Aimed at an audience of graduate students of translation studies, the book serves as an informative socio-political and psychoanalytical compilation of studies on how language can affect a nation and its individual identities, as well as its relation with other countries. While highlighting differences and similarities, Gentzler stresses the inevitability of the hybridization of cultures today, a phenomenon that creates a demand for an increase in translation, as well as sociological, psychological, and cultural studies to understand the workings of a particular society. As pluralistic cultures and languages blend together through translation, Gentzler proposes that new collaborations may be formed to eliminate conflict in the current period of globalization.

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