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Humphrey, Tonkin and Maria Esposito Frank (eds). *The Translator as Mediator of Cultures*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 2010. 201pp

If bilingualism transfers knowledge, resources, information, and ideas from culture to culture, then the translator can be seen as the mediator of cultures. *The Translator as Mediator of Cultures*, is a collection of essays based on a conference held at the University of Hartford in which professional translators, linguists and literary scholars exchange their views on translation and the power it holds throughout the world. The book is divided into three sections, (1) Translation and Reconciliation, (2) Translation and Negotiation, and (3) Translation and the Interpretation of Texts. Reconciliation, Negotiation, and textual exegesis can be viewed as the mediating role

that the translator must strive to provide in today's world.

The introduction of the book discusses the historical evidence of the claims of a translator. Accordingly, translation theory is built around four propositions. When the Bible was translated, the only hopes of the translators were to convey the original divine message, yet it was impossible to transfer these godly messages across cultures while keeping the original message intact. Since the translation of the bible, this field of work has been faced with the problems of a non-changing translator, one who does not modify anything throughout the translation process.

Section one, Translation and Reconciliation is a conversation (in 2009) about politics, translation, and multilingualism in South Africa involving Antjie Krog, Rosalind Morris, and Humphrey Tonkin. South Africa is an example of the urgent need for translation as it is currently moving away from two official languages to embrace eleven official national languages. An-

tije Krog says, “ Translation is not (and never was) on the front burner in South Africa. We come from a past where everybody was forced to speak the two “white” languages: Afrikaans and English.” Krog continues her conversation, conveying the difficulties of forming a country into a place where such linguistic diversity is officially acknowledged. According to the authors, translation should be a national priority in order to let all the people be heard, to widen the cultural base of English, and to begin to include the other nine languages spoken in South Africa.

The rest of part one exemplifies how translation is used as a means of reconciliation across the world. A case study done at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) discusses the linguistic and cultural challenges of translating while highlighting the difficulties with crimes against humanity. Another case study presents the troubles of mediating in the DEAF^WORLD and how to translate and interpret sign lan-

guage. This is a unique chapter in that it takes the general theme of the translator as a mediator of cultures into the complex case of sign language. Since there is a great diversity in sign language, it is crucial that those who translate between the cultures of deaf and hearing people truly know both cultures and linguistic systems. Timothy Reagan, the author of this chapter says, “ Often, given a diverse audience with different linguistic skills and backgrounds, the sign language interpreter is forced to seek some sort of middle ground.” In order to do this, the translator must be extremely well informed.

Part two, “Translation and Negotiation” explores in two chapters the use of translation as negotiation: the first situation concerns the idea that while the translator has practical benefits, there are also hidden psychological disadvantages. The well-known Italian proverb, *traduttori traditori*, means that it is nearly impossible to translate without a hint of treason along the way. This chapter addresses this be-

trayal and how it manifests itself in different ethnic groups and politics. The second of these chapters treats the concept of how translating is not simply the task of decoding and re-coding, but rather how it moves from one language into another as a complex practice in which history is found, renegotiated, and thereby inevitably transformed.

The third and final part of the book, "Translation and Interpretation of Texts" consists of four chapters that reaffirm the difficulties of translating different forms of text. The opening chapter to this part concentrates on the effects of the fall of Communism and the cultures of Central Europe, a time when a world of cultures, not just language, but art, music, and forms of dance were broken into different national identities. Thomas Cooper, author of this chapter, reinforces how translation helped rediscover and reform parts of Central Europe, as it became a multinational region. "Expression and translation of philosophy: Giorgio Colli, a master of time" is a

chapter by Marie-Jose Tramuta that praises the works of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari who won the prestigious Wheatland Prize for Translation in 1987 for the translations and editions of the works of Nietzsche. The chapter focuses mainly on Colli's work as the translator of *Greek Wisdom* (1977) and how his premature death allowed him to complete only three volumes instead of the expected eleven.

As Antije Krog puts it, "Translation is reconciliation. It's a bringing together, a bringing of things to one another so that we understand and access one another from where we come from instead of accepting or forcing people to be "processed" into English." The book *The Translator as Mediator of Cultures* is intended for anyone seeking to understand how translators can serve as mediators of cultures, agents who set the terms of the process of translation, and who determine the forms that linguistic traffic will take. They are not merely mediators between two languages, but rather between

two worlds. Through different case studies, a densely written preface, introduction, and a thorough index, *The Translator as Mediator of Cultures* justifies

translation as possessing a mediating role in reconciliation, negotiation, and textual exchange.

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