Budick, Sanford and Iser, Wolfgang. *The Translatability of Cultures*, 1996. California: Stanford University Press.

*The Translatability of Cultures* is a collection of 14 essays, subdivided into two themes. It is devoted to exploring critiques on oppositeness (alterity) and otherness, within a cultural context of translations. All the contributors to this book have some other publications in the area that they approach, and most of them are very recent, like this book (1996).

This book begins with a short introductory chapter written by one of the editors, Sanford Budick, entitled 'Crises of Alterity', including the approach on critical conditions, self-sameness and secondary otherness of translations. Following this introductory chapter, the next articles are subdivided according to their central approach: the first subtheme is 'Historical Perspective', involving articles on the (un)translatability of religious culture and Biblical poetics; vertical to horizontal translation; universalism; modern American cri-

ticism and cross-cultural persp-
ectives; and on Japanese culture
and the radical otherness. The
second subtheme, 'Models of Rel-
ationship', in turn, involves articles
concerning border crossing in
translation theory, cross-cultural
emergence, cultural ambivalence
and culture and memory transla-
tion. Then the "Coda to Discuss-
ion", by Wolfgang Iser, gives the
reader a general idea on the issues
of translatability, culture, memory
and otherness, and transcultural
relations. Iser uses, as a coda to the
"Coda", reference to Emerson's
*Ethics* also cited by Cavell: ac-
cording to Emerson's advice, in
referring cross-cultural discourse
demandings, and in order to be
careful about ethics, critics should
"rinse their words".

*The Translatability of Cultures*
provides a stimulating compend-
ium of current thought on the issue
of translatability of cultures. Not
only in a overall view, but also con-
cerning memory and differences.
This culture can thus be classified
into special topics, in a way that it
allows the reader to distinguish
between arts, religious, political
and historical approaches. The
language used by the writers is
formal, consisting of high-level
and very specific terms.

Based on its title, *The transla-
tability of Cultures* leads the reader

to initially guess that the book is
concerned with typical words used
to label foods, tradition and habits
inherent to a certain culture and the
difficulties of translating these
words into another culture's lan-
guage. More often, and much more
than expected, the book makes a
broad historical and cultural ap-
proach, having the ancient Egypt
as its starting point and the Japan-
ese cores and patterns as its peak.

However, in observing the ex-
pression *Figurations of The Space
Between*, in the book's cover, it is
possible to infer some 'Biblical
view' within the title's message.
The essays which deal with the
Bible are the most accessible to
readers without a background on
cultural translation since they deal
with the knowledge of Biblical
passages, common to almost ev-
erybody. They all agree in some
ways with what concerns analysis
of the figurative approach to the
Bible language and the existence
of the Holy Spirit spread around
the world by translators, not writ-
ers of the Bible in the Hebrew or
Greek languages, under the view
of Augustine and Chaucer.

Still concerning the Bible's
translation, a subject which is
central to many of the articles of
the book, much emphasis is given
to Augustine's and Chaucer's ap-
proaches, cited by Besserman and

Assman, and still recalled by Cavell in Emerson's "Fate".

Speaking of Assman and the analysis of religion as a factor of (un)translatability, it is important to emphasize that the author analyzes conversion in terms of the language magical function and in terms of the contrast between revelation and evidence in texts. Moreover, syncretism, which means the combination of different beliefs, is a strong point in this article.

As a continuation of thoughts, Barasch presents a case study on arts, concerning visual syncretism. According to Barasch, no matter what the solution is for the case he approached, "it is certain that the spectator's reading made a real difference", and "the spectator's reaction thus became part of the image itself".

Stierle's "Translatio Studii and Renaissance" considers vertical to horizontal translation this way, Stierle considers *translatio* as being a word of the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire, which he refers to as a large system of cultures translation. The conclusions of this article, in comparing the medieval to post-medieval period transitions and the changes from verticality to horizontality as the principal concern in its remarks, can also be considered as a lexical analysis of translation and transition, centering its applications in a cultural, political and historical context. For Stierle, the difference becomes clear since "horizontality cannot overcome verticality".

Although this book does not address the translatability of culture under the common sense view, many of the issues in this book overlap with a highly instructional approach within domains of inquiry of interest on the cultural translation traditions.

The essays collected in this volume, however, are not only concerned with Bible studies. There are some other essays which approach on issues like Holocaust, by Budick and Motzkin; cross cultural perspectives and discourse, by Bercovitch and Iser; and cultural ambivalence, by Lachmann, but these do not seem to be the central subject proposed by Budick and Iser in their editorial collection.

As mentioned before, the 'Coda to Discussion', by Iser, finally gives the reader an overall view of translatability network, by discussing / presenting positions, correlations and interconnections of the constituents of the cross-cultural and intracultural intercourse.

In referring to the umbrella of multiculturalism, Iser states that "there is no way of grasping the

ungraspable", which is responsible for the anxiety that results in the inspiration for the cross-cultural reitifications. The simultaneous occurrence of this anxiety and this inspiration is what makes of *The Untraslatability of Cultures* such a special book. At the same time, it inspires the readers, as it leads him/her to the anxiety in discovering more about culture translations.

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