
Changing the Terms: Translation in the Postcolonial Era. Edited by Sherry Simon and Paul St. Pierre. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000, 305 pp.

Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era is a collection

of essays written by fifteen different authors dealing with various issues surrounding the implications of postcolonial theory for translation studies. The essays investigate the intellectual and ethical basis of postcolonial translation, as well as how it applies to specific world issues. The purpose of compiling this collection was to highlight important works that focus not only

on individual translation projects, but also the relationship between them and institutional pressures influencing them. A basic understanding of postcolonial culture forms the foundation of these articles. The authors define postcolonialism in the following way: "If there is one central image which postcolonialism conjures up, it is the image of the map. To enter into the postcolonial world is to see cultural relations at a global level, to understand the complexities of the histories and power relations which operate across continents."

The book is divided into two distinct sections, which are preceded by an introduction written by Canadian translator and professor from the French Department at Concordia University, Sherry Simon, one of the editors of the book. In this introduction, she summarizes the aims of the book as well as each individual essay. She introduces the idea of different images of cultural impact on translation that she recalls from a lecture given by Indian novelist, Amitav Ghosh as a suitable point of reference in this book: "The first kind of translation, from Ghosh's point of view, results in a static and potentially oppressive array of cultural goods; the second is a

continuous life-giving and creative process." The first section of the book entitled, "(Post)colonialism and the Powers of Translation," focuses on broader issues that pertain to specific national situations in Ireland, China, India, Canada and the United States. The second section, "Scenes of Negotiation," discusses specific cultural practices that have developed as a result of translation in a postcolonial context.

Using as a reference Brian Friel's play, *Translations*, Michael Cronin looks at the relationships that exist among translation, falsification and gathering of information in his essay, "History, Translation, Postcolonialism." In this concrete example, the author believes that translation has a negative impact because the British use translation as a way of enforcing their legitimacy over Ireland. However, Cronin does not neglect the fact that translation can have a positive use in the resistance against the colonizing country.

Leo Tak-Hung Chan also focuses on the idea of resistance in his essay, "Colonization, Resistance and Uses of Postcolonial Translation Theory in Twentieth-century China." He presents two stances taken by Chinese translation theorists as a response to the influences from the

West. One expresses a fear of European influence integrating the Chinese language and “contaminating” it. In opposition to this more conservative position, a more recent theory shows that the Chinese language is still strong and resilient. Chan warns against the use of postcolonial theory as a template for understanding Chinese cultural history and its relationship with the West since he considers it a unique case.

The next two essays maintain an Eastern geographical focus, more specifically, India, by presenting ways in which translation can be used for cultural affirmation. Diptiranjana Pattanaik discusses how translation is highly regarded in the Oriya language in his essay, “The Power of Translation: A Survey of Translation in Oriya.” Oriya, as a regional language, has been sustained by “endotropic” translation, which has helped to construct the distinct identity of Oriya-speaking people. “Endotropic” translation refers to translations of foreign texts into the Oriya language. Although “exotropic” translation (translating from Oriya into English) has brought some attention to Oriya literature, it has not been as influential as translations into Oriya. Shanta Ramakrishna analyzes the use of “counter-translation” as an “anti-hegemonic tool.” These “counter-

translations” attempt to move away from the notion of a British colonial legacy. One of the driving forces behind this is that the British introduced their national literature to India, instead of presenting a variety of the best-known literary works from around the world.

Similar to the way in which Cronin believes that translators are often members of marginalized groups, Jean-Marc Gouanvic uses the example of the “marrón,” (a runaway slave who is successful at surviving in the free world) to prove that marginalized groups exemplify translators in his essay. He also presents some thoughts on the connection of politics and hybridity in the postcolonial era.

Michaela Wolf and Maria Tymoczko consider hybridity as one of postcolonial translation’s most defining characteristics. Wolf’s “The Third Space,” states that one can no longer think of translation as a means of “bridging the gap” between two cultures. Rather, it is an approach through which cultures can be mixed by the bringing of new ideas to another culture. By focusing on the overlap between postcolonial writing and translation, Tymoczko analyzes hybrid practices. She points out that texts can no longer be considered translations even when

they function as a connection between two cultures. Instead, they are creations of new hybrid cultures. She believes that this makes translations and postcolonial works so appealing. However, she does not accept the notion that translations and postcolonial texts should be considered as one and the same. Her aim is merely to make the reader more aware of the distinguishing similarities that exist between the two.

In the second section of the book, the essays are focused on specific translational practices, although the ideas are not far removed from some of the more theoretical ones presented in the first half. For example, Maria-Elena Doyle, in her essay, "A Gesture to Indicate a Presence: Translation, Dialect and Field Day Theatre Company's Quest for an Irish Identity," like Cronin, uses Friel's *Translations* as a point of departure. She focuses on the importance of parallels between dialect and political ideas in the play and reminds the reader that three of the first six plays presented by Friel's Field Day Theatre Company were translations of foreign works. This simple fact is interesting because one of the main goals of the theatrical troupe is to devote itself to the

creation of an *Irish* sense of identity. However, whenever possible, the translators of foreign works leave their own Irish mark. Doyle highlights the important nationalistic role language plays in works of theater.

Louise Ladouceur also writes about the translation of theatrical works in her essay as the historical background of translation strategies present in Canadian theater. She discusses the overwhelming majority status of Anglo-Saxon culture in North America versus the limited French minority and how they influence translation patterns. Due to the strong desire to change this imbalance, Quebec drama often maintains some of the original context as well as the title in French when it is translated. Although this is a continuing trend, Ladouceur states that there has been more diversity in the kinds of plays that have been translated over the last two decades.

Julian de Zavalia keeps the reader focused on North America with her investigation of Latino writers within the United States. She follows the direction of "cultural traffic" in the Americas in the later half of the twentieth century and in doing so hopes to show how translation is part of a system of

activities, including reading, rewriting and reviewing practices. She sees translation as one of the most important “cultural vehicles” in the Americas, which acts as a means of expanding the hybrid Latino presence in the United States.

Although the specific notes and works cited at the end of each essay help the reader achieve a better understanding of ideas and terminology, the lack of a compiled bibliography and index for the book is a valid criticism. Such a compilation would be quite helpful, especially for the reader who has a more directed focus. In addition, because of the range of theories on translation, it would have been more valuable to avoid the repetition of some of the same ideas and works referenced. However, overall,

Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era, with the opinions of fifteen authors from various parts of the world presents a thorough collection of issues and ideas surrounding the controversial topic of translation as both a repressive and liberating practice. The studies include examples from geographically diverse areas and linguistically different situations, but they all analyze postcolonialism through the scope of translation. According to the editors: “Borders do not simply divide and exclude, but allow the possibility to interact and construct. The double vision of translators is continuously redefining creative practices- and changing the terms of cultural transmission.”

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