

BOOK REVIEW OF INGG, JUDITH AND WEHRMEYER, ELLA. AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES ON LITERARY TRANSLATION. ROUTLEDGE, 2021.

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In reflecting on the present condition of a decolonized Africa, Achille Mbembe claims that: "From now on, there is no single speaker or mediator. There is no master or foreman. There is no univocity. Everyone can express themselves in their own language and the recipients of these words can receive them in their own" (*Out of the Dark Night: Essays on Decolonization*, 20).² Although the Cameroonian historian and philosopher is not referring to translation specifically, his words are well fitting in the context of *African Perspectives*. The multilingual dimension implied by Mbembe constitutes one of the challenges faced in the field of translation in Africa. It also reminds us of how these countries, so linguistically and culturally diverse, were compelled to adopt, and adapt, the language of the colonizer in order to express themselves to the world. Translation then emerges as an almost necessary communication process. Even though, as an academic field of study, translation in Africa, more specifically literary translation, is quite a recent one, and still very much understudied.

This is what *African Perspectives on Literary Translation*, edited by Judith Ingg and Ella Whermeyer brings to the table: a set of thoroughly researched scholarly texts focusing on literary translation and Africa. Judith Ingg, Professor of Translation and Interpreting Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, and Ella Wehrmeyer, Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies at North-West University, both in South Africa, are not only the editors of this volume, but they also contribute to the discussion generate in it with their own research findings. Another 15 scholars make their contributions to the book with texts that range from a sociohistorical overview of the field to the practical application of literary translation theory in the classroom.

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² "De agora em diante, não há um orador nem mediador únicos. [Não há senhor nem capataz.] Não há univocidade. Cada um pode exprimir-se na sua própria língua e os destinatários dessas palavras podem recebê-las na sua." (Mbembe, Achille. *Sair da Grande Noite: Ensaio Sobre a África Descolonizada*. Edições Mulemba, 2013)

Published by Routledge, this book is part of a series of publications entitled *Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies Series*. Its main objective is to promote advanced research in the field of translation studies, and it has published a total of 85 titles so far. As for *African Perspectives* itself, its distinctness lies in its purpose to promote theoretical and methodological developments in the field of literary translation from an African standpoint. From this perspective, the book explores distinct concepts, from foundational theory in the general field of translation to more recently developed notions in translation strategies. It also covers the workings of the editorial sector, power relations between distinct agents in the market, reception, and education.

It is divided in four thematic parts, each one focusing on a broader topic in literary studies, and containing a varying number of chapters. Part I, entitled *Methodological and Sociohistorical Overview*, includes three chapters that, together, discuss the practice of translation not only in the African continent, but also of literary texts produced in Africa. Paul F. Bandia revisits the notions of multilingualism, multiculturalism and the aesthetic of orality in Africa as fundamental for his notion of "writing-as-translation". According to him, the act of writing is already in itself an act of translation, just as there is a pre-writing and post-writing translation process to be considered. Thus, the adaptation of orality into writing would be in itself a translation act. Libby Meintjes, in turn, argues in favor of an ethics of translating literature concerned with the epistemological nature of the text. Her notion of fidelity involves mutual respect for the texts, languages and cultures embedded in them. Serena Talento brings a more historical perspective, tracing the history of literary translation into Swahili, "based on Pierre Bourdieu's field theory concerning the (re)production of knowledge" (56). Each chapter in this first section focuses on very different aspects of literary translation in Africa, and they could most definitely be read separately.

Part II is entitled *Product-Oriented Literary Translation*, and the 7 chapters featured in this section are mostly centered on cultural aspects (mainly in the case of Ella Wehrmeyer) that affect translation choices, as well as commercial decisions based on reception. For instance, Bulelwa Nokele analyzes the translation of metaphors in English into isiXhosa; Celena Cachucho proposes the study of linguistic hybridity (Bakhtin) in translation, especially the domestication or foreignisation of indigenous words (based on the conceptual metaphor theory

by Lakoff and Johnson, and Toury's DTS); and Amechi N. Akwanya examines the translation choices for Igbo proverbs in Chinua Achebe's novels (grounded on Ricoeur's and Riffaterre's theories).

Judith Inggs presents a more analytic study of the translation of literature for young adults into French and German, focusing on the paratexts, such as the images on the cover, choice of words in the title and footnotes. Juan Miguel Zarandona discusses the factors that influence the publication of translations of African literature, as well as its exotization in Spanish translations. Eleanor Cornelius and George de Bruin's work investigates how the process of self-translation differs from the work of a secondary translator. While these texts can be connected through their scopus, they can also be associated because of the theoretical framework chosen to support each one.

In a vast majority of these essays, as well as in others in this volume, the reference to well-known names in the field of translation is a constant, including Lawrence Venuti, Jeremy Munday, Mona Baker, Even-Zohar, Susan Bassnett, Andre Lefevere, Gideon Toury, Antoine Berman. These are scholars that must definitely not be ignored, especially in studies about translation. However, and even though some African scholars are mentioned here and there, one would expect to read more about and in their own voice in a book that aims at promoting African perspectives on literary translation. Still, the aforementioned theoretical framework demonstrates, as author Amechi N. Akwanya states, "that African literature can respond to modern theories of literature" (190).

In the third part of the book, *Reception and Process Studies*, there are four chapters. Here, just as in the first section, there is not an overall connectedness among the chapters. The first two chapters, by Mònica Rius-Piniés and Rocío Anguiano Pérez are more focused on gender, examining, respectively, choices to translate texts written by female arabic writers into Spanish, and African theater translated for ideological purposes (mainly in regards to political views). Ilse Feinauer and Amanda Lourens' work would be more similar to Zaradona's, as they also analyze power relations among the agents involved in the translation business. Similarly, Felix Awung's analysis deals with the interpretation of data collected from such agents, namely translators and publishers. In this sense, this section, just as the previous ones, indicates an attempt to combine chapters taking into account their thematic coherence.

The last section of the book, Part IV, is *Decolonizing Literary Translation Studies*, and it contains only one chapter, by Christopher Fotheringham. In his essay, Fotheringham proposes an educational model (based on McKenney and Reeves) to design the program of a course on literary translation for students in Africa. His proposed readings for the first part of the course include: Barthes, Benjamin, Foucault, Gadamer, Iser, Jakobson, Kant, Shkolovsky and Steiner. Later on, discussions would depart from the reading of scholars such as Spivak, Appiah, Venuti, Bassnett and Trivedi, Quayson and Bandia. The purported logic is that students would bring in the African aspect of translation in their discussions in class, and critically reflect on their readings, shifting and adapting theory to their reality.

Overall, the volume succeeds in its goal to delineate the trajectories of African literary translation studies and its application. Historical facts of the evolution of the field in Africa, main scholars, works, methodologies and terminology used in literary translation in general make up the backbone of this book. This publication is, certainly, a useful work of reference for more experienced scholars, as it is the purpose of their editors stated in its introduction. At the same time, it can be accessible to beginners interested in the field, especially considering the variety of topics covered in each chapter.

The studies presented in this volume are well written, informative and reflective pieces that would interest specialists in translation overall. Its focus in Africa is most definitely "a welcome contribution" (xviii) to an under-researched phenomenon, as stated by Mona Baker in the Foreword. Yet, the organization of the chapters and the modest presence of references to African scholars, in contrast with the amount of European and Western scholars, could be a downside for those interested in broadening their African theoretical knowledge per se. This makes one wonder whether Mbembe's surmise regarding the freedom of linguistic expression in Africa has indeed been accomplished.

REFERÊNCIAS

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