

Book Review:  
New Directions In Translation  
Studies  
And  
In Permanent Transit:  
Discourses And Maps  
Of Intercultural Experience

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MAZZEI, C. A. - Book Review: *New Directions in Translations Studies and In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of intercultural Experience*

**New Directions in Translation Studies**, eds. Anthony Pym and Alexandra Assis Rosa, *Revista Anglo Saxonica*, Ser. III, No. 3, University of Lisbon Center for English Studies, 2012, 398 pp., (softcover), available for download at <http://ulices.org/anglo-saxonica/anglo-saxonica-en.html>, ISSN 0873-0628

**In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of Intercultural Experience**, eds. Clara Sarmiento, Sara Brusaca and Silvia Sousa, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, 291 pp., (hardcover), ISBN (13) 978-1-4438-4069-6

The collection of fifteen articles in *New Directions in Translation Studies* is divided into four sections (Literary, Technical, Interpreting, and Audiovisual Translation). The purpose of the volume, according to editors Anthony Pym and Alexandra Assis Rosa, is to provide more visibility to translation studies as a discipline in Portugal (above all for English speakers, presumably, given that all texts are published in English—perhaps a bilingual edition would have contributed more to the “visibility” of the Portuguese language). Apparently to be more inclusive, however, the editors decided to open the volume to contributions from other Portuguese-speaking countries, with an article by Reynaldo José Pagura on the history of interpreting in Brazil, or from areas of research that have not received attention in Portugal, such as the case of the article written by Cecilia Alvstad on anthologies of Latin American literature translated and published in Sweden.

The opening article, “Trusting Translation” by João Ferreira Duarte, provides a timely discussion of why some traditional notions and binary conceptions about translation are still used to judge the quality of translation by scholars and critics. For instance, Duarte argues that while equivalence is a necessary notion in order to ensure trust in translation, it is irrelevant for consumers to know anything about levels of equivalence—since they can neither understand nor access the source language. As an example of the “bona fide transaction” (p. 21) that all translations create, Duarte cites reading the Turkish author Orhan Pamuk in Portuguese translation, noting that

not a single word on the page was actually written by Pamuk (the Portuguese words were, of course, written by Pamuk's Portuguese translator, whom Duarte unfortunately fails to mention). Such considerations usually reflect a narrower, more traditional view of translation focused only on words and linguistic systems, rather than an activity within a sociocultural framework, contradicting his claim early in the article that "my question takes translation to be, first and foremost, a *social* fact..." (p. 19). Moreover, Duarte also seems to suggest a disembodiment of translation when he argues that in everyday transactions we do not actually trust in people but rather in institutions. Readers, according to Duarte, trust the institution of translation, i.e., schools that teach and train translators and ensure that they acquire the appropriate skills and thus become competent professionals. In the end, it is unclear whether Duarte is suggesting that we maintain or discard the "binary thought" commonly used to judge translations, since he states that "there is a lot that goes in its favour" (p. 34), arguing that it is the "stuff", in his own words, that translation criticism mainly relies on.

Duarte's argument might well have benefited from another illuminating essay in the volume, entitled "Under the Sign of Janus: Reflections on Authorship as Liminality in Translated Literature," by Alexandra Lopes, which argues for more studies on translated paratexts. If the Portuguese translation of Pamuk referenced by Duarte had included a few footnotes, or other paratextual interventions, from an "irreverent translator" (p. 138), as categorized by Lopes, its readers would more likely have identified the text as a translation. Lopes considers paratexts sites of authorship, and although she fails to recognize the problematic use of footnotes—pointed out by many postcolonial translation scholars—her article makes a great contribution to the field by suggesting that it might be more useful to consider footnotes as sites of intervention and "rejection of transparency" (p. 149), instead of looking at them as a landscape of failure, i.e., of how translators have failed to carry

over important cultural references from the source culture to the target audience.

The article by Maria Eduarda Kieting, “Translation and Literature Again: Recent Approaches to an Old Issue,” provides a much-needed overview of the contributions of translation studies to cultural and literary research in Portugal. For instance, in relation to studies that have been done within a polysystemic framework or descriptive translation studies, research in Portugal has shown that most translators of books were not “authors” in the traditional sense of the word, suggesting that more inclusive studies should be carried out about all translators, and not only focus on well-known or celebrated ones, indicating that this trend actually contributes to their silence/invisibility in the field.

In the Technical Translation section of the volume, the article “Translating Companies in Portugal” by Fernando Ferreira-Alves provides an overview of the business involved in procuring translation services in Portugal based on a questionnaire prepared by the researchers. There are some interesting findings that point to a shift in perception in the market, such as the fact that many respondents stressed the importance of “university qualification in translation” (p. 241). This type of research can be useful for translator training programs that would like to prepare their students for the business world. Although theory and practice are still seen as separate areas of translation studies, especially by the business world, and, astonishingly so by some translator training programs, perhaps it would have been useful to include a question about the market’s knowledge of theoretical frameworks in translation studies, since theory is widely taught at the university level in translator training and has shown to be very beneficial in educating novice translators.

Reynaldo José Pagura’s article, “Conference Interpreting in Brazil: A Brief Historical Overview and Some Future Trends,” provides a useful account of the early beginnings of the field in the largest Portuguese-speaking country

in the world, one that confirms the elitist nature of the field of conference interpreting, such as the fact that only those who belonged to “Dona Edith’s group” (p. 316)—in reference to Edith van de Beuque, a talented interpreter who received her training from the late Georgetown University program and worked and dominated the Brazilian conference interpreting scenario in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s—were allowed or invited to work as interpreters at certain conferences. The essay also emphasizes the advent of newer technologies, such as remote interpreting with video, which is not a welcome set-up by most interpreters due to the obvious additional layers of complexity added to the cognitive interpreting process. In addition, most interpreters who were members of the Brazilian elite (referred to in the article as “the group”) complained that they are no longer in control of the market, which is understandable, since remote interpreting allows for more competition and price wars among interpreters.

The second volume reviewed here, *In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of the Intercultural Experience*, has set an ambitious goal for itself: that of fostering intercultural dialogue ignored by mainstream academia. The volume is no doubt a welcome addition to discussions surrounding the interconnections of several fields in the humanities, including translation studies: its fifteen articles in three sections (Communication, Regulations, and Transits), attempt to “build effective epistemological bridges between anthropology, historiography, and gender, cultural, communication, literary, media, legal, and translation studies” (p. ix). When listing perspectives from other fields, however, the editors seem to have forgotten to include translation studies scholars in their long list of academic specialists: “sociologists, anthropologists, historians, linguists, educators, lawyers, media specialists, and literary studies writers” (p. ix). Such lack of recognition of translation studies as a scholarly discipline replicates traditional views in the humanities, and excludes many scholars who have made important contributions to all of the fields included in the volume. Yes, André Lefevere,

Sherry Simon, and Susan Bassnett are mentioned in passing in the introduction, but are never explicitly recognized as translation studies scholars. Many of the articles in the collection draw from a broad range of different theoretical sources, but would have benefitted from the inclusion of translation studies in their conceptualizations of the issues. For instance, the few articles that address translation at the heart of intercultural contact, such as “Translation, Commodities, and Genres in Contemporary Cinema” by Hudson Moura, could have benefitted from incorporating translation studies theories that challenge Western conceptualizations and definitions of translation.

Other problems in the volume include the recurrent use of the term “American” to refer to the United States of America and its citizens, as well as organizational ones. All bibliographical references are combined at the end of the volume, which makes it difficult for readers to follow up on citations. In addition, some references are missing: for example, the aforementioned article by Moura quotes M. Nornes on translation and hybridity, but this reader was unable to locate the reference in the bibliography.

The two volumes reviewed here certainly have the potential to make important contributions to the field of translation studies, perhaps most importantly by highlighting its interdisciplinarity and the fruitful research that can be produced from such encounters. Nonetheless, both collections of essays also continue to perpetuate some long-standing omissions (or invisibility, if you will) concerning translation studies as an academic field, notably a lack of acknowledgment and use of major texts in the field of translation studies as foundational frameworks for productive discussions.

Readers of these volumes will benefit from familiarity with contemporary discussions in translation studies, and in the case of *In Permanent Transit*, of other disciplines that share different levels of exchange with the field. Sections are clearly delineated in both volumes, which helps readers select articles based on their special interests. *New Directions in*

*Translation Studies* clearly places translation studies at the heart of discussions of culture, language, literature, technical and audiovisual issues related to translation, highlighting the fact that other disciplines could benefit very much from using some of the discipline's frameworks in their scholarly work, albeit interpreting remains less of a concern. Although *In Permanent Transit* may not recognize translation studies as a main focus, the collection of essays on cross-cultural studies is still useful for translation studies scholars working on similar topics and committed to interdisciplinary dialogue with one or more of the fields covered in the volume.