

**TRANSLATING WORLDS - MIGRATION, MEMORY AND CULTURE, BY
RADSTONE, S. & WILSON, R. (EDS.)**

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This volume, edited by Susannah Radstone and Rita Wilson, explores the relations between translation, migration and memory, from an international and interdisciplinary perspective. It brings together humanities-oriented researchers from a range of related academic disciplines to take part in the translation process, as a means of communication, re-narration, trans-creation and localization across a variety of domains.

Translation is therefore extended beyond the mere comprehension of one language by another. It also encompasses complex and multi-layered processes, that are active, inevitable, yet malleable, having an intrinsic place and space in society, mixing the old and the new, the familiar and the unknown brought into conversation and connection. That is why the book deals with “translating worlds”, rather than translating words.

In this sense, the past is prolonged to the present and historical moments inform the contemporary time. These acts of interpretation, mediation, and negotiation constantly take place across cultures, through visual, vocal, aural, written, analogue or digital technologies. So, as Susannah Radstone points out in “The lost clock: remembering and translating enigmatic messages from migrant objects”, it is a living portrait of a global world with unprecedented movements of people(s), mobility of cultures and migration of other worldviews.

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Consequently, the need for translation is more demanding and must be conceived as a nearly constant, creative and transformative activity that permeates every human interaction.

Translation must be an inclusive process, a key to understand hot issues like migration and social cohesion, identity phenomena, the movement of heterogeneous people to other places and contexts, suggesting multiple responses. Seen from this perspective, it will enable faster communication, comprehension and creativity.

Memory and translation studies help debate migration flows, including how unique cultural memories are translated into other brave new worlds, and how memories of lost homes act as reflexes to homemaking and living the new worlds.

The focus of translation studies has shifted towards a cultural, political and ethical dimension to fully apprehend and support those migration realities, in which objects are not just things, but part of migrant memory brought to illuminate migrant's "homebuilding", and give them meaning by evoking former homes. They cease to be static *lieux de mémoire* with a lost home nostalgia, to become dynamic accounts of travel memories.

They transport new ecologies into home, full of meaning, social relations, and also translation memories and pasts into the present. According to Radstone (p. 25), "remembering from migrant objects, we are never done with translation and translation is never done with us".

In "Tactile translations: Re-locating the Northern Irish disappeared", Alison Ribeiro de Menezes recovers Bella Brodzki's contention that translation makes the dead overcome their fate by being remembered, and therefore in a way reborn, in another time and space. Such is the case of Northern Irish victims, though the paper includes other geographies like Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Yugoslavia, thus surpassing geographic boundaries. For the migrants, there is a strong need to rebuild those worlds in "avenues of reparation" (p. 32), promise and renewal to heal the pain of losing their beloved in the bog – the iconic Irish landscape – or in other geographic meaningful environments.

The Vietnamese refugees' lives are also driven by loss and silence going beyond their travelling to other parts of the world. As argued by Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, the translation process in this particular case does not limit itself only to the memories between the past and present, but also between generations that grew up in different cultures and languages. Their parents' dilemma was "how to tell what they could not bear but their children must hear. From the child's perspective, it was to hear what they could not bear their parents to tell" (p.19). The changes in medium, from oral speech to the visual support of photos and their messages, are seen as an intended legacy that conveys a new piece of information that goes far beyond what is written.

Therefore, in "The past in the present: Life narratives and trauma in the Vietnamese diaspora", translation can be a heuristic tool for understanding the process of migration while foregrounding homemaking, as a place of hospitality, inclusiveness and empathy. It is intergenerational, intra-ethnic, and thus a cultural translation, because it implies the learning of a foreign culture, with new meanings and values, carrying also the vague and sometimes controversial past. That is what Grace Pundick's also emphasizes in "Beyond the written embodying the sensorial as an act of remembering" through an account of her translation of a traumatic family past.

The need for releasing feelings can also take place in the realm of language. That is the reason why Mridula Nath Chakraborty focuses on the case of writer Jhumpa Lahiri, whose language of freedom is Italian instead of English, in which she had been "trapped" since she was three years old. The new language provides new linguistic ambition, a place of reflection on our own existence. And just like identity does not relate to a territory but to language, memory, and culture, migration does not take place between countries, but between languages, cultures and memories.

As pointed out by Kyle Harvey and Kate Darian-Smith in "Translating Australia: language, migrant education and television", the notion of choosing a migrating language to

spread one's wings and fly away in a new world of colourful meanings, also dictates a path of self-discovery and a newfound sense of place by means of translation, with the help of mass media, to reach a larger number of migrants.

However, as Diego Lazzarich specifies in “Foiba: Genealogy of an untranslatable word”, there are words that simply cannot be translated at all. A case in point is “foiba” (mass graves), a term associated with the victims of military retaliations and political assassinations, which has gone beyond the primary meaning of the word. The impossibility of finding an appropriate translation for some words is due to larger issues of context, history and convention tied to them, leading to the need to develop yet other forms of communication. This is the case of Poland, where hidden and subliminal messages were conveyed by the back inscriptions of photos, to prevent them from being understood and taken away by the communist regime. as Katarina Kwapisz and Jacqueline Lo describe in their “*Can we talk about Poland?: intergenerational translations of home*”.

The volume provides different examples of a growing interest in the notion of “translating zones”, understood as places of intersections, contacts, tensions and relationships. They are urban areas of interaction across languages, which have acquired a particular local environment, due to the successive migrants' settlement movement. As Rita Wilson illustrates in “Changing place: narratives of migration, cultural memory and belonging”, the arrival of migrants has brought more or less visible changes and challenges derived from established uses of space, thus altering landscapes and sometimes questioning former identities. The same phenomena seem to happen to elder generations and long-term residents, who see the changes in their living places through the replacement of the historic shops with new ones, bringing new sounds and scents, and changing the aspect of the streets.

That may be a good sign – an example being the Milanese periphery that has become a long global place where everybody feels welcome, where everybody greets each other in

many languages. The increasingly heterogeneous becomes vital in many other cities around the world. Therefore, boundaries are blurred, and translation becomes a street activity.

In all, there has been a shift in which translation brings together discursive constructions of place, multidirectional memory and translational storytelling, thus making the links between language, place, and identity more explicit. Translation is one of the most effective ways to underline the ever-moving dynamic weaving of the fabric of society, lived experience, memory and history, and it sheds light on loose stitches that puts everything together. That is why this book is pertinent to understand the new present, as well as the future paths and perspectives for translation as a meaningful activity.

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