
Introduction

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Abstract & Keywords

Keywords:

Bref, les espaces se sont multipliés, morcelés et diversifiés. Il y en a aujourd'hui de toutes tailles et de toutes sortes, pour tous les usages et pour toutes les fonctions. Vivre, c'est passer d'un espace à un autre, en essayant le plus possible de ne pas se cogner.

Georges Perec, *Espèce d'espaces*, 1974.

The studies collected in this special issue are the result of a long-term collaboration between three institutions – the Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali of the Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia, the Centre des Recherches Pluridisciplinaires Multilingues of the Université Paris Nanterre and the Dipartimento di Interpretazione e Traduzione of the Università di Bologna –, which has led to the organization of conferences, workshops and joint publications focusing on the status (nature, function) and the cultural and political impact of the act of translation[1].

The group of scholars involved in this ongoing collaborative effort operate on the basis of a number of shared assumptions and intentions which, to simplify somewhat, can be summarized as follows: 1. to rethink the act of translation beyond its simple dimension as passage (translation as “bridge” or “transfer”) between two languages, conceived as closed systems, irremediably different but equivalent; 2. to break out of the exclusively “derivative” nature of the act of translation, to question its creative and cultural scope; 3. to recognize and investigate the social and political implications of translation within the more general framework of power relations between languages and within the circulation of ideas and imaginaries.

The contributions we highlight here represent a small selection of the papers presented at the international conference on “Space in Translation” held in Modena, Italy, from May 8 to May 10, 2019. [2] It was the feeling of the organizers – Franco Nasi, Lucia Quaquarelli and Marc Silver – that offering a broad-based interdisciplinary gaze of the terms in question would spawn creative ways to rethink the translation paradigm while permitting a critical examination of its social and political implications. With this in mind, a number of scholars were invited to offer keynote presentations and actively participate as discussants in round table debate. Michael Cronin, Rainier Grutman, Nigel Leask and Sherry Simon, whose contributions appear in this special issue, were joined by Daniel Gunn (American University of Paris) and Myriam Suchet (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle), both of whom appeared as keynote speakers and were members of the international scientific committee.

As the editors hope will be apparent from the articles presented in this issue, the interest in offering fresh and insightful thinking from fields as far apart as psychoanalysis and geography, literary criticism and philosophy, was privileged over the desire to establish rigid theoretical parameters in an attempt to posit a unitary theory of ‘space in translation’.

Despite its spatial implicitness, the dialogue between translation and space is relatively recent and is part of the so-called “spatial turn”, which has swept through the humanities and social sciences, cutting across disciplines such as literary studies, history, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. In disseminating and incorporating terms borrowed from geography – place, space, territory, atlas, map, cartography – this turn has highlighted the eminently situated nature of translational practice, how it operates within specific historical-geographic, linguistic, cultural, editorial and political coordinates. In the wake of recent post-colonial and cultural studies, it has unearthed the relations of force and power within the “places” of translation and in the broader context of the circulation of texts, languages and imaginaries. To think translation as a *localized* practice has as well impeded the *monolingual address*, which has undervalued or trivialized the situated dimension of every linguistic community (and every linguistic variant), fueling the monolingual “fiction”. Moreover, to think of translation as a practice *in situ* has opened up a reading of places as *spaces of/in translation*, that is, places as visible, mobile and unstable traces of the relations and resonances between and among languages.

The conference has offered an occasion to reflect on the different ways space/translation may be thought and articulated. The treatment offered here essentially moves along four main axes. A reflection is first of all offered on the “space of translation”, which questions the « géographies » of translation (from and toward what languages translation takes place, the paths and ways chosen for translation), the places the translator operates in, the directional flows of translation, the places theoretical reflection emanates from; “space *in* translation”, which is to say, the circulation of spatial imaginaries across languages; “places of translation”, or the places where the linguistic relations and translation devices help to found and create cultural communities (the city as a set of signs and of relations within and across languages); and finally “translation *as* space”, that is, translation as third space, intralingual, heterolingual address.

The papers collected in this issue provide interesting perspectives along all four of these axes and, starting from a transdisciplinary approach, help to rethink translation not only in relation to its spatial dimension, but beyond the rigid borderlines that separate it from other cultural production as well.

Notes

[1] See, in particular, the special issue of *Ecritures*, n.7 (2014) entitled *Traduire le postcolonial et la transculturalité. Enjeux théoriques, linguistiques, littéraires, culturels, politiques, sociologiques*, L. Quaquarelli and K. Schibert (eds); the special issue of the online journal *Mediazioni*, n. 21 (2016) entitled *Voci della traduzione*, C. Denti, L. Quaquarelli, and L. Reggiani (eds); the special issue of *Ecritures*, n. 10 (2018) entitled *Traduire hors-ligne*. A. Frenay, L. Quaquarelli, and L. Reggiani (eds).

[2] Another group of papers presented at the conference were published in *Mediazioni* n. 27 (2020), in the special dossier *Plurilinguismo, eterolinguisimo, exofonia: alla prova della traduzione*, L. Quaquarelli, L. Reggiani and M. Silver (eds).

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