

Kathryn BATCHELOR and Claire Bisdorff (ed.). *Intimate Enemies – Translation in Francophone Contexts*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013

The annual publication of the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies, *Intimate Enemies – Translation in Francophone Contexts*, edited by Kathryn Batchelor and Claire Bisdorff, hopes:

[...to] stimulate and enrich debate among scholars across a number of academic domains, and in particular that the emphasis laid on the positive power of translation will shift discussions from what is lost, or threatened, through translation to what might be gained and strengthened both in literature and in society and global relations more generally. (2013:12)

And I have to say that the volume succeeds very well in its task of drawing together reflections by translators, authors and academics alike. The perspectives that emerge in the various articles move beyond traditional views on translation as a process of gains and losses. Translation is, on the contrary, shown to be a most valuable tool in revealing the dynamics and pressures relevant to the political and economic contexts in which books are written, read and sold. Translations can in fact under specific circumstances become a tool to promote linguistic diversity – as well as confirming the cultural and language power structures of globalization.

First, I would like to state that this is a challenging, instructive and indispensable book for the reader interested in literature from geographical areas in which the linguistic legacies of French colonial operations are long-lasting and complex; namely Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. The volume is free from exaggerated academic jargon and presents the arguments in the articles in a straightforward manner, provoking new insights

about the force of the process of translation in these parts of the world. As a scholar of Translation Studies, I read the book as further development of Post-colonial Translation Studies and the Sociological Turn of Translation Studies. The most striking development taking shape in the volume within the Post-colonial Translation Studies paradigm is the focus on the possible positive impact of translations – and not solely on the negative complicity of translation in colonial conquest. The insight that Post-colonial Translation Studies often ignores the deep structures of national belonging and economic interests contouring the international cultural industry is also effectively addressed. Within the Sociological Turn of Translation Studies where translation is viewed as a socially regulated activity in society, the volume furthers the debate in focusing on the translators – *Translator Studies* – and the problems involved in translating literary works, demonstrating tensions between languages at their very core.

The volume consists of three general sections. Each of the sections focuses on a special kind of “intimate enemy relation” – the intriguing phrase from the title of the volume alluding to the work of Ashis Nandy (1983), *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. The first section in the volume, entitled *The Translation Market: Publishing and Distribution*, focuses on the translation market and reveals the pressures under which both authors and translators operate. The opening chapter by M. Adejunmobi explores how the translation of literary texts into local languages might be achieved and how this type of translation might increase and strengthen language diversity in Africa. The next paper by P. Hawkins on writing from the Indian Ocean presents a situation where there is considerably greater linguistic diversity in writing and where translation already plays a significant role. The other two chapters in this section explore publishing issues through particular case studies. One of them, by A. Small, examines the interplay between publishing, translation and the establishment of historical narratives. Small very convincingly shows that translators and translations also act as “gatekeepers of ideas”, confirming or contesting established versions of history and representations of historical figures such as the ongoing mythologization of Patrice Lumumba.

The second section of the volume *Writing and Translating in Practice* gives voice to three widely translated and well-known authors; Maryse Condé, Veronique Tadjo and Ananda Devi, as well as to four experienced translators of African and Caribbean Literature. The paper by K. Gysels and Ch. Pagnouille, for example, illustrates the complexity of reflection that is involved in translating the typically heterophonous work associated with Caribbean literature into or out of French or English. The introductory chapter in this section, *Intimate Enemies: a Conversation between an Author and her Translator* – from which the title phrase of the entire book is borrowed – is an enlightened and somehow surprising debate on the relationship between writing and translating professionally and privately.

The third and to my mind the most challenging section, *Translation Challenges and New Avenues in Post-colonial Translation Theory*, focuses on works by key figures in African and Caribbean literature. The paper by C. Gilogley, for instance, inquires into the challenges for translators posed by the idiosyncratic French of Patrick Chamoiseau's fiction. She discusses the fact that although translations are fundamental to cross-cultural relations, it is a double-edged necessity. While translation does have the potential to be a site of hegemonic complicity, it can equally serve as a tool of counter-culture, subverting the dominant value system and shifting the reception of a translation, or a literature. Gilogley cites Venuti's interpretation of the translation market as prescriptive and pre-emptive of translators' choices and projects when concluding that the English-language translations of Chamoiseau's work suffer from what he calls "furtive domination" of Western hegemonic discourse and target the rich industrialized North rather than an Anglophone-Caribbean readership.

K. Batchelor's contribution to the volume (except for her excellent *Introduction: Translation – Formidable Enemy or Needed Friend?*) studies the ideological implications of the translations of the intense intertextuality in the novels of the Francophone author originally from Congo-Brazzaville, Alain Mabanckou. One way of interpreting the function of the intertextuality in his novels is to evoke what is called the 'parodic revision' model, which is based on the assumption that post-colonial writers revise canonical

European literary texts in order to challenge European colonial ideology and “write back” to traditional colonial discourses. Batchelor explores the implications of the intertextual difference in the French source texts and in the English target texts and comes to the conclusion that the process of translation – especially when it concerns intertextuality – becomes a type of sifting process, retaining and sometimes reinforcing the texts from the centre and eliminating many of those from the periphery. The study of intertextuality in translation can thus serve as a mirror, reflecting the true positions of various literatures and authors in the cultures into which the text is being translated. The likelihood of an intertextual reference to survive in translation will be strongly shaped by the ‘weight’ of the culture from which it is drawn within the target culture.

In her chapter, A. Water addresses and challenges the fundamental standpoint that the aim of a translation should recreate the linguistic complexities of the original and that a naturalizing translation strategy is a particular form of betrayal in the post-colonial context. Her case study consists of a trans-colonial translation (the translation of a writer from the periphery (David Dabydeen) by another writer from the periphery (Anada Devi)), where she argues that the naturalization of non-standard language in translation is not always interpretable as a negative movement of re-colonization. Devi’s trans-colonial knowledge of the complex linguistic and cultural particularities of Dabydeen’s source text, motivates and justifies her naturalizing approach to the translation of its creolized English idiom and has nothing to do with the urge of early orientalist translators to ‘improve’ the source text. She argues that it matters enormously who the translator is, and indeed, that some translators are better – or at least better placed – than others. Waters concludes that her attention to the identity as well as to the function of the translator goes against the dominant tendency in Translation Studies to depersonalize the process of translation.

The last paper I will comment on and also the concluding chapter of the book is written by P. Bandia, who argues for a shift in the conceptual framework by which both originals and their translations are evaluated. The traditional binary relations in Post-colonial Translation Studies – the

colonizer–colonized dichotomies for instance – are left behind and following the recent trends within Post-colonial Literary Studies, Bandia opts for new ways of studying African society and literature in its own right and not in relation to the hegemonic West. His study seeks to overcome such colonial essentialism by shifting the focus away from the *métropole* and onto the dynamics of class and power that underlie power relations in the post-colony. His paper thus focuses on the translation as a fact of life in post-colonial contexts. According to Bandia, there has been a significant shift in expression of resistance from anti-colonialist struggles to conflicts defined according to dialects of class and power. The post-colony is fictionalized through aesthetic practices based on orality and linguistic innovation as well as on a discourse of the carnivalesque. Within this context, linguistic pluralism is the norm and translation becomes a means or strategy for dialogue and communication. Bandia studies the writings and translations of Mongo Beti and Calixthe Beyala and reveals that they are not necessarily aimed at accommodating outsiders or the global readership. The translator of contemporary post-colonial fiction is necessarily, according to him, plurilingual, translating a heterolingual or polylingual text, whose translation should reflect its polylingual character and ideally will be read by an equally polylingual rather than a monolingual public.

To sum up this review, I would like to conclude that the reading of the volume indeed stimulated and enriched my knowledge and thoughts about the possible impact of the translation process both globally and locally and Post-colonial Translation Studies in general. In particular, the shift from what is lost, or threatened, through translation to what might be gained and strengthened is to my mind as important as was the paradigmatic shift in the 1980s in Translation Studies from the linguistic normative approach to translation to the cultural descriptive approach. The volume *Intimate Enemies – Translation in Francophone Contexts* has all that it takes to become a classic and an intimate enemy to scholars and students alike all over the world.

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