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INTRODUCTION

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The translational epistemologies of World Literature

Les épistémologies traductionnelles de la littérature-monde

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世界文学的翻译认识论

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OUTLINE

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TEXT

- 1 With the decline of interest in Comparative Literature in the English-speaking academy in the closing decades of the twentieth century (Bernheimer, 1995), there was uncertainty as to the future of modes of literary analysis that might move outside the frames of the nation-state and beyond the monolingual assumptions with which that unit is customarily associated (Gramling, 2016). As will become apparent in the discussion below, these debates emerged with different emphases across different linguistic traditions, but the (re-)emergence of an interest in World Literature has revived more broadly critical engagement with the study of literary production within larger and wider frames, characterized by Christopher Bush (2017) as “bigger than the nation, smaller than the world” (p. 171). As examples of this, Bush (2017) cites the following units:

[...] oceanic (the Transatlantic; the Black Atlantic; various framings of the Pacific; most recently the Indian Ocean), continental (the Americas; Europe; Asia), imperial (Ottoman; Mongol; post-Soviet; Qing); linguistic (the Sinophone; the Sanskrit cosmopolis), and commercial (the silk road; the Mediterranean). (p. 171)

- 2 The advantage of such approaches is that they have the potential to “break open the limits of the national while retaining enough specificity to allow for in-depth research” (Bush, 2017, p. 171). The emphasis on such a post-national project reflects the extent to which World Literature, in a period that juxtaposes economic globalization with a reassertion of populist nationalism, may also be seen as a political intervention rooted in forms of transnational solidarity, i.e., an attempt—through the identification of culturally inclusive literary works or via the adoption of more open reading practices—to foreground or imagine alternative ways of configuring the world—and, by extension, of creating knowledge about it. The juxtaposition of *world* and *literature* poses, however, a series of other questions, raised by critics such as Pheng Cheah (2016), about the role of World Literature as both creative (and of course commercial) phenomenon. It also offers a parallel set of analytical approaches related to constructing and deconstructing knowledge about the world, both in terms of ideology and phenomenology. What has been striking in such debates is the propensity of critics to operate monolingually, either (a) working across a linguistic zone (such as, as Bush suggests, the Sinophone or the Sanskrit cosmopolis) that transcends national boundaries but largely forgets the tendency of languages to co-exist, in diglossic or polyglossic relations, or (b) rendering invisible the work of translation that enables (and inevitably shapes) criticism that seeks to negotiate multiple boundaries. Yet there is increasing recognition in a number of key works discussed below—among them Apter (2013) and Baer and Woods (2022)—of the importance of an active acknowledgement of the challenges of translation and of associated concepts such as the “untranslatable” in discussions of World Literature. This article engages with these ongoing debates. Focusing primarily on the French-language context, it seeks to explore, within the framework of considerations of the “world” that World Literature reflects or constructs, ways of addressing what may be seen in this context as the epistemological functions of translation, i.e., its role not only as a

mode of textual circulation but also as a means of building knowledge about the world. It argues that translation is more than a facilitator in that it creates the means by which texts in different linguistic and cultural traditions may be brought into dialogue; but that translation also plays a definitional and even constitutive function in World Literature, central to its own function of building understanding about literature's broader world-making power.

- 3 The article opens with a discussion of the ongoing debates—including Forsdick (2019), on which the current study in part builds—regarding the relationship between World Literature and translation. It draws on recent interventions but also analyzes the practical example of *littérature-monde en français* (“world-literature in French”). The study then builds on this overview by foregrounding the function of multilingualism as a key (if often ignored) aspect of the World Literature field, suggesting that the linguistic plurality that underpins World Literature is central to its potential to navigate global complexity. In this reflection on the intersections between multilingualism and translation, I emphasize the generative potential of untranslatability, as formulated by Barbara Cassin and mentioned above, and more particularly the role of this concept in identifying World Literature as a site of translational epistemologies. Translingual and cross-cultural creativity, and the forms of reading and analysis it encourages, are seen as key to the elaboration of potential new forms of knowledge about an interconnected, multilingual world. I conclude with a reflection on the later work of Édouard Glissant on translation and relation, suggesting that the archipelagic practices of creation and interpretation that he outlines may be seen to exemplify the translational epistemologies increasingly associated with World Literature.

World Literature and the function of translation

- 4 Susan Bassnett (2019), reflecting on her experience of the World Literature Summer Institute at Harvard in 2014, referred to the “abyss between the study of world literature and the study of translation” (p. 1). This appears to be a somewhat paradoxical statement given the growing awareness of the indispensability of translation as a tool in

the global circulation that allows much World Literature to come into being, to circulate and then to be read. Translation not only permits texts to exist and circulate between and across cultural and linguistic traditions; it also often plays a crucial role in enhancing their visibility, granting works written in minoritized languages a life beyond their cultural origin (Mercero, 2021) and on occasion elevating writing outside its national frame to the status of a 'classic' (Bandia et al., 2024). In short, as Lawrence Venuti (2013) notes, "World literature cannot be conceptualized apart from translation" (p. 193). The disconnection that Bassnett notes is nevertheless persistent, as is evident, for example, in the critical attention paid to a manifesto published in *Le Monde* in March 2007 that promotes a specifically French version of World Literature, a *littérature-monde en français* (Le Bris et al., 2007). Little of the commentary on this intervention has in fact yet explored, in any direct way, the complex questions of translation implicit in but never fully addressed by this polemical text, coordinated by authors Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud and signed by forty other writers from across the French-speaking world. Instead, what is striking is that much discussion of this "world-literature in French" often seems to be locked into a monolingual, Gallocentric agenda largely dictated by the manifesto itself, reflecting (rather than offering any active solution to) the crises evident in French literature as a national literature since the closing decades of the twentieth century (Marx, 2005; Todorov, 2007). It is important to note that this linguistic self-referentiality exists despite the fact that one of the earliest critics of the document, Jean-Pierre Cavaillé (2007), signalled these very limitations from the outset in an article in the French daily newspaper *Libération*, noting that "What is unbearable is that the world, the wide world, is once again perceived, viewed exclusively via the small end of the telescope of the French language, and from its undisputed and indisputable centre" (Ce qui est insupportable, c'est que le monde, le vaste monde, une fois de plus n'est perçu, aperçu, que par le petit bout de la lorgnette de la seule langue française et depuis son centre en fait incontesté et incontestable) (my translation).

- 5 I begin with these observations on *littérature-monde en français* not as an attempt to single out debates regarding World Literature in the French-language context for their specific monolingual bias or as

evidence of any residual ethnolinguistic nationalism in approaches to literature. Such monolingual emphases exist across critical traditions. This article seeks instead to contribute further, from this starting point in the recent French-language tradition, to ongoing debates about World Literature and translation. It aims to extend the current considerations of the translational dimensions of genre, linguistic diversity, textual circulation, and literary values (Sun, 2019) in order to ask more focused questions about the function of translation, within and across texts, as a key element of the role played by literature in creating knowledge about the world. As I suggested above, the phenomenon of “world-literature in French” has often been understood as one that emerged in a specifically French and Franco-phone niche (Forsdick, 2010b, 2010c), taking little account of those related and competing concepts—such as “World Literature”, *Weltliteratur* or *literatura universal*—that have emerged across other linguistic traditions. *Littérature-monde en français* emerged and evolved, as a result, as a strangely oxymoronic phenomenon, monolingually French yet still aspiring towards the more broadly disruptive transnational and translational reach that its active hyphenation of *literature* and *world* implies. This is despite the linguistic realities of the Francosphere, evident not least in France itself, a country that, in tension with the ethnolinguistic (and often linguaphobic) nationalism of its republican universalist ideology, has always already been characterized by multilingualism (Blanchet, 2019). In the light of such an analysis, the term “French-speaking” world itself becomes a misnomer, for the French language exists throughout this zone in the diglossic or polyglossic configurations alluded to above. As such, the phenomenon of “world-literature in French” illustrates the state of the contemporary “global languagescape” in which, as Mary Louise Pratt (2011) has noted, “new forms of linguistic distribution are in play” (p. 279). Speculating on the futures of multilingual, translingual, translational literary forms in which these sociolinguistic phenomena are manifest, Pratt (2011) adds: “This is another reason why even the experts have no idea what the world will look like linguistically a hundred years from now. For many of the same reasons, we have no idea what literature will look like either” (p. 279). There is a need to build on such reflections regarding what a purposefully post-monolingual (Yildiz, 2012) World Literature increasingly resembles—and to ask more particularly whether and indeed how the place of

translation in such a designation may move beyond the vehicular to acquire broader epistemological implications.

World Literature in a multilingual frame

- 6 It has become commonplace to note that any definitive concept of World Literature—since Goethe designated the phenomenon with the German term *Weltliteratur* in his conversations with his young disciple Johann Peter Eckermann in January 1827—has long been elusive. These genealogies are nevertheless telling and underline the distinctiveness of debates about World Literature across different language traditions. It is essential to note, for instance, that the emergence of *Weltliteratur* in the context of the German Romanticist movement was arguably the first attempt to overthrow the Gallo-centric drive, most notably in Friedrich Schleiermacher's writings on translation and his critique of the French imperialist method of translation (Schleiermacher, 1992). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the concept has again attracted close attention across a range of linguistic traditions, not least in the context of the globalization of the novel and of the emergence of contemporary literatures in post-national and transnational forms. Within this broader context, any clear definition of “world-literature in French” itself has been equally absent, with many dismissing the movement as little more than a form of literary marketing, i.e., an example of carefully orchestrated media hype around the already very visible appearance of writing in France and the broader Francosphere that is variously and disruptively postcolonial, transnational, and translingual (Hargreaves et al., 2010).¹ The 2007 manifesto announcing the advent of “world-literature in French” promised much but ultimately delivered little in terms of concrete illustration of the literary tendencies that it proposed. An announced periodical associated with the movement may never have materialized, but the launch in 2014 of two World Literature prizes in France—one for a work written in French, the other for a text originally written in another language but subsequently made available in French translation—indicated some sort of acknowledgement of questions of multilingualism and gestured towards the role of translation in their resolution. This

understanding of World Literature as either produced in one specific language or translated into that language as a means of circulation beyond its context of origin resonates with questions central to this article and raises key questions about the function of translation: including (a) does this recognition reflect a new inclusivity, moving beyond initially monolingual French-language emphases to acknowledge the various translational dimensions of writing in or across different language traditions, as was the case with an earlier literary movement in France, *Pour une littérature voyageuse*, from which “world-literature in French” emerged (Forsdick, 2010a)? Or (b) does it instead represent a more retrograde step, perpetuating that same binary by embedding a distinction (and, by extension, creating an implicit hierarchy) between texts written directly in French and those translated from languages other than French, relegating translation again to its more functional purpose?

- 7 In the absence of any definitive response to these questions or active illustration of their implications beyond the original 2007 manifesto, it remains unclear whether the “world” in *littérature-monde* remains, in this way, fundamentally fractured along linguistic lines (implying the perpetuation of a Gallocentrism in terms of which translation is a means of recuperating and assimilating other literatures into French), or whether a more purposeful foregrounding of the concept of translation might instead open up new possibilities, previously unimagined (and indeed unintended) in the initial outlining of any World Literature in its French-language manifestations. The reflections that follow seek to situate questions of initial language choice more overtly in relation to those of translation—with translation seen here not as a mode of circulation of texts between different linguistic spheres, but instead as a potential site not only of literary creativity but also, by extension, of the creation of knowledge in its own right. Rather than seeing writing as rigidly codified variously as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, I outline the possibilities afforded by actively understanding the world literary text itself as an increasingly dynamic and translingual “translation zone”. The term suggested by Emily Apter (2006) designates “sites that are ‘in-translation’, i.e., belonging to no single, discrete language or single medium of communication” (p. 6). Apter’s designation is a telling one in the context of the current reflections, for it makes explicit the literary

and linguistic dimensions of a cognate concept, designated by Mary Louise Pratt (1992) as a “contact zone”, which refers to “an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (p. 7). In the context of World Literature, this emphasis on the geographic and historical is complemented by attention to the linguistic, allowing these contrasting ideas of co-presence and disjuncture to respond to Bassnett’s reservations about World Literature and translation with which the article opened, and to encapsulate the ultimately entangled phenomena of multilingualism and translation that underpin this article. The readability of various multilingual practices and other literary manifestations of linguistic plurality is accordingly linked to a potentially broader understanding of translation as one of the emerging paradigms underpinning cultural production—and I would add production of knowledge about the world through literature—in the twenty-first century.

World Literature and translational epistemologies

- 8 Deploying these concepts allows a much broader reflection on the role of translation in relation to World Literature than is often the case. In the process, it highlights the implications of growing observations about the overlap or intersection between translation and globalized forms of literary production in the light of critical tensions around concepts such as Anglocentrism (Webb, 2013), epistemicide (Price, 2023), and perhaps most strikingly untranslatability (Cassin, 2004; Apter, 2013; Harrison, 2014; Xie, 2020). It is important, however, to develop, and in many ways move beyond, understandings of the various roles—ranging from the instrumental to the heuristic—that translation is understood to play in the production, construction, and consumption of World Literature. In the context of this special issue, I seek in particular to explore how these interpretations, while remaining important, may be supplemented by more epistemological understandings of the potential of translation in this literary space. It is clear that translation has regularly been deployed as a defining element of World Literature, notably in the foundational work of

David Damrosch, who has claimed in numerous contexts that it is circulation among different languages that underpins the ‘gains’ of any work that falls into the category, i.e., it is translation that permits the text to “circulat[e] out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin” (Damrosch, 2003, p. 12). Such translingual and translational displacements also underpin key elements of Pascale Casanova’s highly influential thesis in *La République mondiale des lettres* (Casanova, 1999; 2004), according to which centripetal passage through Paris (often, importantly, accompanied by translation into French) has functioned as a form of literary consecration, not only in the past but also more recently for emerging national literatures in the specific wake of decolonization. This article explores, expands, and ultimately challenges such reflections on the place of translation in the production and consumption of World Literature. It accepts (as is now broadly accepted) that translation may form in this context a key trope or lens through which writing associated with this category may be identified and explored, but will further suggest in what follows that World Literature may also itself prove to be generative of a broader translational epistemology.

- 9 It is important to reassert that the concept of World Literature—from its initial coining by Goethe in the form of *Weltliteratur*, as alluded to above—has sought to disrupt, through various translational forms of the circulation of texts, the methodological nationalism evident in the study of national literatures. The act of translating World Literature was, for instance, politically motivated in the German Romanticist movement, as it developed the non-domesticating method of translating, as opposed to the French approach to translation as a *belle infidèle*, with an emphasis on elegance of style trumping any adherence to the original text (Venuti, 1995, pp. 84–98). However, as I have suggested in the recent French case, World Literature has often replaced such biases with others, notably those of a limited, monocultural epistemology that risks approaching literature alinguistically, according to a fundamentally monolingual logic. Such an understanding fails to acknowledge the challenges of reading, researching, and more broadly thinking in the actively multilingual ways that seem central to any genuinely worldly World Literature, i.e., “in the presence” (*en présence*)—to adopt the phrase of Martinican thinker Edouard Glissant, of whom more below—“of all the world’s languages”

(de toutes les langues du monde) (Glissant, 2020a, p. 23/1996, p. 40). It also largely ignores the associated phenomenon that Alison Phipps (2013) has called a more general “unmooring” of languages in the twenty-first century. Phipps refers here to the way in which the monolingualizing tendencies of historically centralized states such as France—tendencies often shored up by cultural and literary institutions such as the Académie française (Estival & Pennycook, 2011)—have increasingly been superseded by the contemporary condition known as post-monolingualism (Yildiz, 2012).

- 10 The persistence of monolingualism is evident, in particular, in much Anglophone scholarship, but perpetuated through the Anglocentrism and even Anglonormativity cultivated by the global academic publishing industry (Amano, 2023; Salomone, 2022). It has been rigorously critiqued by scholars such as David Gramling (2016), and there is undoubtedly increasing awareness of the potential of a more inclusively translational dynamics that underpins the circulation of works of literature in a global frame. In a pedagogical setting, building on now well-established understandings of the (in)visibility of the translator, students studying World Literature in one language only (usually, but not exclusively, in English) are increasingly taught to read translations consciously *qua* translations (Baer & Woods, 2023), encouraged to focus accordingly on challenges identified and then solutions proposed by the translator as opposed to assuming that they have some sort of seamless, unmediated access as readers to the ‘original’ text. Such an approach relates to the increasing awareness—popularized in the provocative work of scholars such as Clive Scott (2012; 2018)—that translation may itself be the highest form of literary criticism as it engages with the micro and the macro, i.e., implies an incomparable intimacy with the text and a familiarity not only with its polysemy and other linguistic (and indeed multimodal) subtleties, but also close familiarity with intertextual and intercultural resonances.
- 11 This emphasis on the epistemological functions of translation suggests, *in extremis*, that “a text is known *only by translating* it and never by only reading it” (Dickow, 2021, emphasis in original); in other words, translation is a privileged form of reading, but not all reading is translation. Such reflections on the translational dimensions of consumption and reception are complemented with an

increasing attention to the place of translation in production, with Rebecca Walkowitz (2015) exploring the extent to which World Literature is inherently “born translated”, i.e., studying how translation acts as a literary medium in its own right rather than simply as an element of a text’s subsequent circulation and interpretation. Moving then beyond translingual shifts towards the actively translational and focusing on English-language literature, relatively recent studies such as Walkowitz’s *Born translated* (2015) and Fiona Doloughan’s *English as a literature in translation* (2016) have begun to suggest that translation is not secondary to much contemporary literature, cannot be reduced to playing the instrumental or heuristic functions to which I have alluded above, but exists instead as an element essential to the production and interpretation of literature, linked closely to the poetics underpinning its creation. “[T]ranslation”, writes Walkowitz (2015), “functions as a thematic, structural, conceptual, and sometimes even typographical device. [...] [Born translated] works are *written for translation*, in the hope of being translated, but they are also often written as translations, pretending to take place in a language other than the one in which they have, in fact, been composed” (p. 4).

- 12 Much of Walkowitz’s analysis here overlaps with arguments around translingual writing, exploring texts that circulate in multiple languages so that the distinction between original and translation collapses (Kellman & Lvovich, 2021). As Vijay Kumar (2007) has noted, “We live in a society where heteroglossia is commonplace. It’s a society where, if you seek to represent that society in a single language, no matter what that language is, you are in some profound way distorting the reality” (p. 104). In the light of this observation on the normalization of multilingualism in the contemporary world, the challenge is to reflect on World Literature as a mode of translation both within and across languages, i.e., as both intra- and interlingual. As Rafael Schögler (2022) notes in his study of the multilingual collection of essays entitled *The great regression*, “In contrast to relationships described with the prefix *inter* or *multi*, the *trans* prefix transcends binaries. It does not designate transfer taking place *between* separate entities, but rather emphasizes intricacies and transformation from within” (p. 29; emphasis in original). World Literature understood in these terms, as a translation zone, acknowledges once

more what Bakhtin called (almost a century ago) the “heterology” of the apparently monolingual text. The French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and other world languages often seen as the predominant media of World Literature are not only languages variegated in their usage, requiring thus for their study approaches that are more heterogeneous; they are also means of communication that exist in these persistently and increasingly diglossic and polyglossic configurations alluded to above, not least in countries such as France or Britain or Australia or the USA, where they are systematically subject to processes of translation, but also drawn into new linguistic and cultural phenomena such as creolization and translanguaging (Rosenwalt, 2008). Literature can, as a result, be seen as an increasingly translational formation, leading to a progressive provincialization of English, and indeed of French and of other majority languages. Openness to a wider range of languages, or at least to a variety of linguistic interconnections, is integral to a reconfiguration of the frames in which literature emerges, meaning that a concept of literary belonging that associates a single language with a unified geography (whether national, transnational or regional) is increasingly redundant. Reflecting on eco-translation, Michael Cronin (2017) has argued that “communities using minority languages have a right to be heard and translated in a globalized knowledge- and policy-making environment” (p. 2; cited in Schögler, 2022, p. 33), the implication being, in Schögler’s (2022) terms, that there is a need to promote “a translational epistemology which is not limited to producing knowledge but sets out to question and reflect upon prevailing conditions of transnational [...] knowledge-making epistemologies” (p. 33).

Literary creativity and/as translational epistemology

- 13 World Literature, as creative and critical practice, increasingly plays a role in such processes. Studies of contemporary literature have recently responded to these linguistic, cultural, and ideological concerns by actively foregrounding questions of translation, not only as a key phenomenon that enables reading interlingually across traditions, but also as a source of resistance to any monolingual or nationalist status quo. As part of a related reflection on the inherent

creativity of the phenomenon (Lukes, 2023), translation has progressively embedded itself in understandings of the actual production of the translingual and transnational literary text, as if it is not only a mode of circulation and critical consumption, but also a process of world-making in its own right. A recent proliferation of studies on translingual or exophonic writing—with authors opting to operate in languages other than their first—has underlined the contemporary visibility of the phenomenon in a variety of contexts, whilst excavating its historical precedents and their cross-cultural reach (Kellman, 2000). Seen as a particularly striking example of literature as a translation zone, translingualism serves as agent of the active disruption of linguistic and national boundaries, and of the defiance of any attempt to create clear hierarchies between them. This is particularly striking in the Anglosphere, where translingual writing in English has a dynamic of its own, associated with what Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien (2004) dubs the disruptive “weirding” of language evident in the work of exophonic Anglophone authors such as Junot Diaz. Rachel Gilmour (2020) builds on such an analysis to explore what she calls “Bad English”, contemporary writing in Britain that is denaturalized and in the process revitalized by the tangible presence of linguistic difference on the page.

- 14 Such an understanding of an actively translational literary creativity echoes the observation of Reine Meylaerts (2013) on the ways in which multilingualism poses both challenges and opportunities for translation studies:

Traditional definitions considered translation, implicitly or explicitly, as the *full* transposition of *one* source language message by *one* target language message for the benefit of a *monolingual* target public. [...] At the heart of multilingualism, we find translation. Translation is not taking place *in between monolingual* realities but rather *within multilingual* realities. In multilingual cultures (assuming there are such things as monolingual cultures), translation contributes to creating culture, in mutual exchange, resistance, interpenetration. (p. 519; emphasis in original)

- 15 Contemporary manifestations of these phenomena within the multilingual realities of literary production always, of course, need to be historicized in relation to a long tradition of multilingual writing and

the production of translation effects in the creative text. Contemporary examples of the literary text as translation zone seem to indicate new directions: translation is seen as embedded in the text rather than as a process that links separate texts. In other words, there is an active shift away from the traditional definition of translation as the replacement of one language by another, of one literary text by another. In terms of identifying concrete examples of such practices, illustrating a translational poetics that underpins the epistemological potential of World Literature to (re)make the world, the Caribbean provides strikingly creative instances, including the work of the Martinican poet and translator Monchoachi (pseudonym of André Pierre-Louis). Monchoachi's writing, in texts such as *Lémistè*, *Partition noire et bleue*, and *Fugue vs Fug*, published in 2012, 2016 and 2021 respectively, engages with the linguistic translation zones in which the writer operates by adopting what Kavita Ashana Singh (2014) dubs "complicated curations between Creoles and standardized European languages" (p. 91). Literature that emerges from such a poetics of actively intratextual translation depends at the same time, she continues, on the introduction of translational skills in the act of reading: "Frequently written between tongues, then, this linguistic and literary form of creoleness calls on readers to, consciously or otherwise, engage in continuous translation as they navigate these bilingual and multilingual texts" (Singh, 2014, p. 91), suggesting that understandings of world-making in such texts are as much about reception and interpretation as they are about production.

- 16 Writing by authors such as Monchoachi, himself a translator of Samuel Beckett into Martinican Creole, is not so much a challenge to the translator as a questioning of the usefulness or necessity or even possibility of translation itself, as the text achieves a form of expression that Lise Gauvin (2012), drawing on the work of Édouard Glissant (1997) and adapting his concept of the *Tout-Monde* (Whole-World), has dubbed a *Tout-langue* (Whole-Language). This is not the search for a universal language, but the development of a linguistic consciousness in which translation and solidarity with wider networks of multiple languages become apparent, disruptively and unsettlingly so as they create what Gauvin (2023) has recently called a literary "intranquility". Paul Bandia (2012) has identified the more

general implications for French-language poetics of such a shift: the emergence in postcolonial contexts—in the wake of pioneering earlier writers such as Ahmadou Kourouma—of a “heterolingual literature, where several languages or language varieties are at play, defying traditional monolingual translation principles and calling into question the status of the original versus the translated text” (2014, p. 421). Complementary tendencies are also evident in other contexts, notably contemporary North African literature, in which the novel is increasingly understood as—in Hoda El-Shakry’s (2016) terms— “pluralistic, polyphonic and polysemic” (p. 8), developing Moroccan author Abdelkebir Khatibi’s earlier reflections in texts such as *La Mémoire tatouée* and *Amour bilangue*, published respectively in 1971 and 1983, on literary bilingualisms and the status of North African literature in French as a “permanent translation” (El-Shakry, 2016, p. 13).

- 17 These creative and theoretical interventions foreground the status of World Literature as a potential site of epistemic and cultural difference, in the understanding of which translation plays privileged and multiple roles. As such, there is a pressing need to move beyond translation as part of what remains an important broader multilingual methodology that is gaining increasing traction in the context of the decolonization of knowledge (Phipps, 2019). Specifically, there is a need to foreground an actively translational epistemology to respond in particular to the growing emphasis on linguistic sensitivity in the construction of knowledge, evident notably in Barbara Cassin’s (2004) philosophical interventions around the notion of the *(in)traduisible*, or *(un)translatable*, a notion developed in relation to World Literature by Emily Apter (2013) and others. The concept of the *(un)translatable* is central to the study of World Literature itself, not least as readers and critics grapple with the divergences and convergences between the term and its (not-quite-)equivalents in other linguistic traditions alluded to earlier (*Weltliteratur*, *littérature-monde*, *literatura mundial*,...), and as they seek to address different understandings of translation itself, encoded in the various etymologies of the words (*traduction*, *Übersetzung*, ...) used to describe the process across different languages (Guldin, 2022). At the same time, as Dilip Menon (2022) has recently demonstrated in *Changing theory: Thinking from the Global South*, any systematic attempt to develop

critical approaches suited to analyzing the global depends not only on generating a conceptual vocabulary that jolts us out of Anglo-centrism and broader Euronormality, but also on forcing recognition that the monolingual risks being the monologic. Vocabularies such as those proposed by Menon and his collaborators are underpinned by epistemological sensitivities that will necessarily be multilingual. At the same time, these vocabularies are freighted via translational approaches that seek actively to de-create language hegemonies, avoiding in the process the polarizing implications of any bilingual (or even multilingual) approach, yet also following Tim Ingold and others in challenging the assumption that translation undermines a concept of “the world in which people dwell as a continuous and unbounded landscape, endlessly varied in its features and contours, yet without seams or breaks” (Ingold, 1993, p. 226).²

Conclusion: Translation as archipelagic practice

- 18 I turn in conclusion to Edouard Glissant, one of the key thinkers to articulate such an approach in an initially Antillean but then more global frame. Glissant's work has already been cited above. Signatory of the 2007 manifesto “for a world-literature in French”, Glissant nevertheless openly questioned the closed concept of *littérature-monde* through his notion of the *Tout-Monde*. He did this in part by challenging the monolingualism inherent in the “en français” by which that body of writing was oxymoronically defined, in part by linking his own reflections on writing “in the presence of all the world's languages” (*en présence de toutes les langues du monde*) to a coherent statement of translational epistemology (Glissant, 2020a, p. 23/1996, p. 40). This statement is articulated throughout his work, as both literary practitioner and global thinker, notably around the concept of what he called *la Relation* (Glissant, 1990), a reflection on the forms of global co-existence, interdependency and co-constitutiveness that transform borders (including linguistic ones) from being impermeable to becoming points of entanglement and passage. This approach also resonates with his engagement with language in the context of the *Tout-Monde*, according to which multilingualism is not a quantitative accumulation of languages but a qual-

itative reflection on their relationality (Gauvin, 1999, p. 282; Sofo, 2022, p. 79). In one of his final essays, *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Glissant foregrounds translation not as a secondary activity but as a literary genre in its own right and no longer a tool in the service of other literary genres: “It is not only an invention limited to marvellous equivalences between two language systems; it also creates new categories and concepts, it shakes up existing orders” (Elle n’est pas seulement une invention limitée à des équivalences merveilleuses entre deux systèmes de langage, elle crée aussi des catégories et des concepts inédits, elle bouscule des ordres établis) (Glissant, 2005, p. 143, my translation; see also Britton, 2008a). Translation is seen here as “put[ting] languages and cultures into circulation in new interlocutory contexts, joining them and their historical traditions in new and dynamic ways” (Bermann, 2014a, p. 80). Although for a long time largely invisible in the literature on translation theory, Glissant in fact produced across his career a substantial body of thought on language and translation. At the same time, as part of an emerging canon of World Literature, his own writing has itself undergone a process of translation that has ensured its impact on postcolonial thought more broadly.³

- 19 In *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Glissant links translation to the notion of *Relation*, which is central to much of his work, suggesting that translation may in fact be seen as a form of multirelation, a way of making sense of the world. Translation links all parts of the world without relying in the process on any move towards universal equivalence that ultimately erases or absorbs political, cultural, and historical specificities. Celia Britton (2008b) sees translation in Glissant as “the invention of a new *langage* that bridges two *langues*” (p. 78), i.e., it functions as a form of creativity that creates links between cultures in a process that activates distinctive linguistic and cultural systems while transforming that linkage into a new form of relation that is purposefully translational. Translation thus attains a key epistemological function in Glissant’s notion of a new archipelagic thought, in which opacity operates in a similar way to untranslatability, avoiding any rigid polarization of closed systems of thought and remaining “non-systematic, changeful, open to the unexpected” (Bermann 2014b, p. 4). Such an approach is evident also in attempts to render Glissant’s own work into multiple languages, where concepts lend

themselves to an “archipelagic reading” (Sofa, 2020, p. 1) via which processes of deliberative, thick, prismatic translation allow the reader to grapple productively with the opacity of Glissant’s work, which “can only be read in Relation to its translations, in this multilinguistic ‘rhizome’ created by the fruits of the linguistic and literary hybridization that it has itself produced” (Sofa, 2020, p. 11). In his *Traité du Tout-Monde*, Glissant elaborates a translational epistemology via description of an “art de la fugue”:

La traduction est comme un art de la fugue, c’est-à-dire, si bellement, un renoncement qui accomplit. Il y a renoncement quand le poème, transcrit dans une autre langue, a laissé échapper une si grande part de son rythme, de ses structures secrètes, de ses assonances, de ces hasards qui sont l’accident et la permanence de l’écriture. Il faut consentir à cet échappement, et ce renoncement est la part de soi qu’en toute poétique on abandonne à l’autre. L’art de traduire nous apprend la pensée de l’esquive, la pratique de la trace qui, contre les pensées de système, nous indique l’incertain, le menacé, lesquels convergent et nous renforcent. Oui, la traduction, art de l’approche et de l’effleurement, est une fréquentation de la trace. Contre l’absolue limitation des concepts de l’‘Être’, l’art de traduire ramasse l’‘étant’. Tracer dans les langues, c’est ramasser l’imprévisible du monde. Traduire ne revient pas à réduire à une transparence, ni bien entendu à conjoindre deux systèmes de transparence. Dès lors, cette autre proposition, que l’usage de la traduction nous suggère : d’opposer à la transparence des modèles l’opacité ouverte des existences non réductibles. (Glissant, 1997, pp. 28–29)

Translation is like an art of flight, in other words, so eloquently, a renunciation that accomplishes. Renunciation when the poem, transcribed into another language, has given up the greater part of its rhythm, its secret structures, its assonances, these accidents that are the chance and the permanence of writing. We must accept these losses, and this renunciation is the part of oneself that in any poetics we give up to the other. The art of translation teaches us the thinking of evasion, the practice of the trace, which, as against systematic thought, points the way to the uncertain, the threatened, which come together and strengthen us. Yes, translation, art of the approach and the light touch, is a way of frequenting the trace. Against the absolute limitation of the concepts of ‘Being’, the art of

translation brings together the 'being'. To trace in languages is to gather together the unpredictable in the world. Translation does not consist of reducing something to transparency, nor of course in joining up two systems of transparency. Hence, this other proposition, which the practice of translation suggests: to set against the transparency of models the open opacity of irreducible existences. (Glissant, 2020b, p. 16)

- 20 Glissant moves here beyond any understanding of translation as an instrumental practice that regularly accompanies the creation of knowledge, or even as the crucial heuristic concept central to processes of making meaning. By foregrounding translation in his own concept of Relation, he raises it instead to what Schögler (2022) dubs “the level of an epistemology, where the knowledge-making potential of translation practices is recognized, and where researchers drawing on the assumptions that underpin such an epistemology can engage with translation in a self-reflexive manner to frame their (scholarly) knowledge-making practices” (p. 43). Moreover, the epistemological is underpinned here by a clear ethical purpose, by an ethics that “would accept the ‘opacity’ of the source text, while not overwhelming it or pretending to fully comprehend and transparently restate it in an equivalent semantic and syntactic structure” (Bermann, 2014b, p. 7). Acknowledgement of these translation practices in analyses of World Literature suggests the extent to which this phenomenon might not only serve as a means of reflecting on or analyzing the world, but increasingly also plays a key epistemological role in unmaking and remaking knowledge about that world.

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NOTES

1 While this article focuses primarily on current debates in a French-language context, the argument I outline here might be developed beyond the immediate French context in two ways: first, by situating this discussion within a broader historical overview of French translation methodology (considering, for instance, early modern debates in the work of Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt and others about adaptation rather than translation); and secondly, by reflecting on parallel developments in an Anglo-American setting, where World Literature—as was made clear in the opening paragraphs of this article—acts as the direct heir of Comparative Literature, with World Literature now taught widely as a course across Anglo-American universities and colleges.

2 On Ingold and translation, see Harding (2021).

3 This is a process we seek to continue through the Glissant Translation Project, of which I am co-director. See <https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/topic/book-series/the-glissant-translation-project>.

ABSTRACTS

English

Translation has regularly been deployed as a defining aspect of World Literature. This is notably the case in the work of David Damrosch, who claims in a number of studies that it is circulation between contexts in different languages that underpins the ‘gains’ of any work falling into the category. This article explores, expands, and ultimately challenges such readings by focusing, in addition, on the production and consumption of World Literature, suggesting not only that translation may form, in such contexts and in the light of such understandings, a key trope or lens through which writing associated with this category may be identified and explored, but also that World Literature, conceived in such circulatory and relational terms, potentially allows us to analyze the presence and function of a translational epistemology in this body of writing. As such, the argument seeks to move beyond translation as methodology to propose the presence of a set of translational epistemologies, contributing thus to the growing emphasis on linguistic sensitivity and global relationality in the construction of knowledge, as illuminated notably by Barbara Cassin’s philosophical interventions around the notion of the *(in)traduisible* and Edouard Glissant’s reflections on translation in the *Tout-Monde*.

A synopsis of this article can be found [here](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.475) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.475>).

Français

La traduction a régulièrement été identifiée comme un aspect déterminant de la littérature-monde. C’est notamment le cas dans les écrits de David Damrosch, qui affirme dans plusieurs études que c’est la circulation entre contextes dans des langues différentes qui sous-tend les « gains » de toute œuvre relevant de cette catégorie. Cet article explore, puis fait évoluer et finalement remet en question ces lectures en se concentrant également sur la production et la consommation de la littérature-monde. Il suggère non seulement que la traduction peut constituer, dans de tels contextes et à la lumière de telles explications, un trope essentiel ou une lentille à travers laquelle on peut identifier et explorer l’écriture associée à cette catégorie, mais aussi que la littérature-monde, conçue en termes circulatoires et relationnels, nous permet d’analyser l’existence et la fonction d’une épistémologie traductionnelle. De cette façon, il cherche à aller au-delà de la traduction comme méthodologie pour proposer une épistémologie traductionnelle, ce qui contribue à mettre l’accent davantage sur le rôle de la sensibilité linguistique et la relationnalité globale dans la formation des savoirs, évidents notamment dans les interventions philosophiques de Barbara Cassin (2004) autour de la notion de l’(in)traduisible et les réflexions d’Édouard Glissant sur la traduction dans le *Tout-Monde*.

Un synopsis de cet article se trouve [ici](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.494) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.494>).

لطلما أدت الترجمة دوراً محورياً في فهمنا للأدب العالمي، وتبرز هذه الفكرة في كتابات ديفيد دامروش الذي يرى في عدد من دراساته أن تداول عمل أدبي بين سياقات متعددة في لغات مختلفة يعزز مكانته ويضفي عليه طابع العالمية. أمّا هذه المقالة فتأتي لتستكشف مثل تلك القراءات وتُفصّل فيها وتحدّثها أخيراً من خلال التركيز على إنتاج الأدب العالمي واستهلاكه؛ إذ أن الترجمة -بالمفهوم هذا وفي سياقات كهذه- ليست مجرد أداة أو عدسة يمكن من خلالها التعرف على الكتابات المرتبطة بالأدب العالمي ودراساتها، بل أيضاً تشير إلى أن الأدب العالمي -عند تصوّره بهذه الطريقة التداولية والعلائقية- يسمح لنا برؤية إبستمولوجيا ترجمية تؤدي دوراً في هذا النوع من الكتابات. لذا يسعى هذا الطرح لتجاوز اعتبار الترجمة مجرد منهجية ويقترح وجود مجموعة من الإبستمولوجيات الترجيمية، مسهمًا بذلك في التأكيد المتزايد على الحساسية اللغوية والعلائقية العالمية في بناء المعرفة، ومن أبرز القائلين بهذه الفكرة هما باربرا كاسين في كتاباتها الفلسفية عن مفهوم "(in)traduisible" ("عدم قابلية الترجمة") وإدوار غليسون في نظريته للترجمة في "Tout-Monde" ("العالم الشامل").

بإمكانكم الاطلاع على ملخص المقالات عبر هذا الرابط (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-tra>) (nslation.570).

Español

La traducción se ha utilizado regularmente como un aspecto que define la Literatura Mundial. Este es el caso, en particular, de la obra de David Damrosch, quien afirma en una serie de estudios que es la circulación entre contextos en diferentes lenguas lo que sustenta las "ganancias" de cualquier obra incluida en la categoría. Este artículo explora, amplía y, en última instancia, pone en tela de juicio tales lecturas centrándose, además, en la producción y el consumo de la literatura universal, sugiriendo no sólo que la traducción puede constituir, en estos contextos y a la luz de dichas interpretaciones, un tropo o lente clave a través del cual se puede identificar y explorar la escritura asociada a esta categoría, sino también que la Literatura Mundial, concebida en términos circulatorios y relacionales, nos permite potencialmente analizar la presencia y la función de una epistemología traslacional en este cuerpo de escritura. Como tal, el argumento trata de ir más allá de la traducción como metodología para proponer la presencia de un conjunto de epistemologías traslacionales, contribuyendo así al creciente énfasis en la sensibilidad lingüística y la relacionalidad global en la construcción del conocimiento, tal y como iluminan notablemente las intervenciones filosóficas de Barbara Cassin en torno a la noción de lo (in)traduisible y las reflexiones de Edouard Glissant sobre la traducción en Tout-Monde.

Aquí (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.562>) se puede acceder a una sinopsis de este artículo.

Magyar

A fordítást gyakran alkalmazzák a világirodalom meghatározó aspektusaként. Így tesz munkásságában például David Damrosch is, aki számos tanulmányban állítja, hogy a különféle nyelvű kontextusok közti csereforgalom az, amely alátámasztja a világirodalom kategóriájába tartozó bármely mű 'nyereségeit'. Jelen tanulmány feltérképezi, kitágítja és végsősoron megkérdőjelezi az effajta olvasatokat azzal, hogy a világirodalom termelésére és fogyasztására is figyelmet fordít. Egyrészt azt állítom, hogy effajta kontextusokban és értelmezések fényében a fordítás olyan kulcsfogalom vagy lencse, amelyen keresztül a világirodalom kategóriájához sorolható írások beazonosíthatók és tanulmányozhatók; másrészt arra is rámutatok, hogy egy körforgásként és viszonyrendszerként elgondolt világirodalom potenciálisan lehetővé teheti egy fordítási episztemológia jelenlétének és funkciójának elemzését ebben a korpuszban. Ekként jelen írás a fordítást mint módszertant kívánja meghaladni, hogy helyette fordítási episztemológiák jelenlétét javasolja, tovább fokozva a nyelvi érzékenységre és a globális relacionálásra tett növekvő hangsúlyt a tudástermelésben, amit Barbara Cassin a(z) *(in)traduisible* [lefordítható/lefordíthatatlan] fogalma köré font filozófiai intervenciói, valamint Édouard Glissant fordítással kapcsolatos gondolatai a *Tout-Monde*-ban is érzékletesen megvilágítanak.

A tanulmány összefoglalója [itt](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.564) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.564>) olvasható

Omsetjing har ofte vorte sett på som ei definerande side ved verdslitteraturen. Dette gjeld særskilt for arbeidet til David Damrosch. I ei rekkje studiar hevdar han at det er vekslinga mellom samanhengar i ulike språk som utgjer tilskotet til alt arbeid som fell inn under kategorien. I denne artikkelen utforskar, utvidar og, til slutt, utfordrar eg slike lesingar ved også å setje søkjelys på tilverkinga og forbruket av verdslitteratur. Eg foreslår ikkje berre at omsetjing, i slike rammer og i ljøs av slike forståingar, kan vera ein nykkeltrope og ei -linse som verdslitterær skriving kan gjenkjennast og verta utforska gjennom. Eg gjer òg framlegg om at verdslitteratur, som er oppstått så sirkulært og relasjonelt, tillet oss å greia ut nærværet og verk-naden av ei omsetjingsepistemologi. På den måten freistar argumentet å gå vidare frå omsetjing som metodologi, for heller å foreslå ein omsetjingsepistemologi. Såleis vil eg medverka til ei aukande vektlegging av språkleg varleik i kunnskapskonstruksjon, slik det kjem til syne i dei filosofiske intervensjonane til Barbara Cassin rundt ideen om *(in)traduisible* og Édouard Glissant sine tankar om omsetjing i *Tout-Monde*.

Eit oversyn av denne artikkelen finn du [her](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.567) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.567>).

Türkçe

Çeviri sıklıkla dünya edebiyatının tanımlayıcı bir unsuru olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu görüş, özellikle David Damrosch'un çalışmalarında öne çıkmaktadır. Damrosch, birçok çalışmada söz konusu kategoriye ait eserlerin elde ettiği 'kazanımların' temelinde farklı dillerin bağlamları arasındaki dolaşımın yattığını iddia etmektedir. Bu makale, dünya edebiyatının üretim ve tüketimine de odaklanarak bu tür okumaları araştırmakta, genişletmekte ve son olarak sorgulamaktadır. Ayrıca yalnızca çevirinin bu tür bağlamlarda ve anlayışlar ışığında söz konusu kategoriyle ilişkilendirilen yazıların belirlenip araştırılabileceği kilit bir mecaz veya mercek işlevi görebileceğini değil, aynı zamanda böylesi dolaşımsal ve ilişkisel koşullarda tasarlanmış olan dünya edebiyatının, potansiyel olarak bu yazı bütününde bir çeviri epistemolojisinin varlığını ve işlevini incelememizi sağlayacağını da öne sürmektedir. Bu kapsamda, söz konusu argüman metodoloji olarak çevirinin ötesine geçerek özellikle Barbara Cassin'in (*in*)traduisible kavramı çerçevesindeki felsefi müdahaleleri ve Edouard Glissant'ın *Tout-Monde*'da ortaya koyduğu çeviri hakkındaki düşüncelerinden hareketle, bilginin inşasında dilsel duyarlılık ve küresel ilişkiselliğe yönelik giderek artan öneme katkıda bulunan birtakım çeviri epistemolojilerinin var olduğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu makalenin genişletilmiş özetine [buradan](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.565) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.565>) ulaşabilirsiniz.

中文

翻译经常被用作“世界文学”的一个核心特征。戴维·达姆罗施 (David Damrosch) 的著作就是一个典型的例子，他在多项研究中声称，不同语言语境之间的流通支撑起任何属于这一类别的作品获得的“收益”。本文通过关注“世界文学”的创作和消费，探索、扩展并最终挑战了此类解读，文章不仅表明在这样的背景和理解下，翻译可能形成一个关键的桥段或视角，通过它可以识别和探索与这一类别相关的写作，而且，以这种流通和关系术语构想的“世界文学”可能使我们能够分析翻译认识论在这一写作中的存在和功能。因此，该论点试图超越翻译作为方法论，它提出一套翻译认识论的存在，从而促进在知识构建中越来越强调的语言敏感性 (linguistic sensitivity) 和全球关联性 (global relationality)，正如芭芭拉·卡辛 (Barbara Cassin) 对“ (不可) 翻译”[(*in*) traduisible]概念的哲学干预和爱德华·格里桑 (Edouard Glissant) 在 *Tout-Monde* 概念中对翻译的反思所阐明的那样。

本文的 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.569>)概 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.569>)要可以在 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.569>)这 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.569>)里 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.569>)查阅 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.569>)

INDEX

Keywords

translation, world literature, opacity, French, monolingualism, multilingualism, Edouard Glissant

Mots-clés

traduction, littérature-monde, opacité, le français, monolinguisme, multilinguisme, Édouard Glissant

الكلمات المفتاحية

الترجمة, الأدب العالمي, الغموض, الفرنسية, الأحادية اللغوية, التعددية اللغوية, إدوار غليسون

Palabras claves

traducción, literatura mundial, opacidad, francés, monolingüismo, multilingüismo, Edouard Glissant

Kulcsszavak

fordítás, világirodalom, átlátszatlanság, francia, egynyelvűség, többnyelvűség, Edouard Glissant

Anahtar kelimeler

çeviri, dünya edebiyatı, opaklık, Fransızca, tek dillilik, çok dillilik, Edouard Glissant

关键词

翻译, 世界文学, 不透明, 法语, 单语主义, 多语主义, 爱德华·格里桑 (Edouard Glissant)

AUTHOR

Charles Forsdick

University of Cambridge, UK

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/082081069>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7470-8421>

ISNI : <http://www.isni.org/0000000054177937>

BNF : <https://data.bnf.fr/fr/14509833>

Translating concepts from Latin American philosophy: Ontologies and aesthetics in the work of Rodolfo Kusch

Traduire les concepts de la philosophie latino-américaine : Ontologies et esthétiques dans l'œuvre de Rodolfo Kusch

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拉丁美洲哲学中的概念翻译：鲁道夫·库什 (Rodolfo Kusch) 作品中的本体论和美学

Joshua M. Price

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OUTLINE

Situating Kusch and his philosophical method: Narratives of everyday life

Researching and translating Kusch

América

Pulcritud vs. hedor

Ser vs. estar

Conclusion

TEXT

I would like to acknowledge the substantial comments provided by Mona Baker and John Ødemark, and by an anonymous external reviewer. María Constanza Guzmán discussed many of the key concepts with me. I owe an enormous debt to María Lugones (1944–2020) for the years of conversation, collaboration, and collaborative translation that ground this text. Any remaining errors are mine alone.

- 1 In *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977), Argentinian philosopher Rodolfo Kusch aims to recuperate a form of thinking he believes lies at the root of the American continent, though he thinks it is covered or buried underneath a dominant way of thinking imported from Europe. “The search for an Indigenous way of thinking”, he explains, “is motivated not only by the desire to uncover it scientifically, but by the need to rescue a style of thinking which, as I see it, is found in the very depth of América and maintains a certain potency among people born and rooted here” (*La búsqueda de un pensamiento indígena no se debe sólo al deseo de exhumarlo científicamente, sino a la necesidad de rescatar un estilo de pensar que, según creo, se da en el fondo de América y que mantiene cierta vigencia en las poblaciones criollas*) (Kusch, 2010, p. lxxv/1977, p. 11). Thinking in and from the Americas has an ontological dimension for him: *being* in the Americas is different from *being* in Europe, to paraphrase Walter Mignolo (2010, p. xviii). Kusch ties this ontological distinction to a linguistic and grammatical distinction in Latin American Spanish that does not exist in English: *ser* vs. *estar*, which I explore in some detail below. This and other key concepts posed a challenge for my co-translator, the late María Lugones, and me, as we set out to produce an English translation of his book, which we eventually published as *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* (Kusch, 2010) as part of the Duke University Press series *Latin America Otherwise*.
- 2 The purpose of this essay, however, is not merely to fret over how to translate words from one language to another; rather, it is to consider how translating key concepts in a given body of work can bring worldviews and linguistic horizons into new relationships with one another and engender novel narratives and traditions. As Marilyn

Gaddis-Rose (1998) has argued, translating concepts can further be a means of analyzing or interpreting those concepts. Translation, in this reading, is a way of giving textual and material life to the intellectual activity of conceptual analysis, a way of embodying or realizing that analysis in textual form. In the particular case of translating Kusch, deciding whether and if so how to translate key concepts such as *estar* (to be) or *América* can provoke a reflection on the practice of translation itself. Thus, translating can be a metapragmatic exercise, engendering thinking by both translator and reader on how languages and conceptual schemas might stand in relation not only to each other but also in relation to an evolving social context in a dynamic way, a dynamism enhanced by the very practice of translation.

- 3 To illustrate how translation practices can instigate this kind of reflection, I focus on several difficult-to-translate concepts that Kusch identifies in common words from Latin American Spanish as his entry points to excavate the bases for an autochthonous Latin American philosophical tradition—a tradition emerging from and corresponding to everyday life in América, as he might have put it. In particular, the focus in what follows is on geographic, aesthetic and ontological terminology. Some of the key terms Kusch isolates and that I engage with below are *América* (which could be misleadingly translated as “America”); *pulcritud* (“order” or “cleanliness”) in contrast to *hedor* (“stench”) as a binary at the heart of Latin American modernity; and, most of all, as I already mentioned, the distinction in Spanish between *estar* and *ser*, on which Kusch bases a complex ontological theory informed by Quechua and Aymara thinking. In subjecting these quotidian terms to exegesis and conferring upon them a philosophical heft, Kusch is not merely describing an existing state of affairs; instead, he points to a beyond, a hoped-for reality for Latin America that does not yet exist. The *América* of his title is aspirational.¹ Correspondingly, we could describe the afterlife of América granted through the linguistic borrowing in our translation as a narrative reframing of the continent. I draw on Mona Baker’s understanding of narrative here as including larger configurations rather than narrowly as only “discrete, fully articulated local ‘stories’” (Baker, 2006, p. 4). Through the translation, we can see an emergent alternative to hegemonic geographies. If a shimmering, incipient

América offers an alternative narrative to conventional geography with its deference to the nation state, national borders, and possibly identity, *pulcritud* and *hedor* present an alternative narrative along the axis of aesthetics and urban design, and the distinction between *ser* and *estar* an alternative ontological narrative.

- 4 I begin by situating Rodolfo Kusch's philosophical project within its wider context and explaining what I take to be his philosophical method. It is necessary to explore in some detail Kusch's method of conducting research and drawing on narratives of everyday experiences because that method informed and inspired our own process of translating, as will shortly become clear. I will then turn to our corresponding method of translating his text, focusing on the process of narrative retelling we engaged in.

Situating Kusch and his philosophical method: Narratives of everyday life

- 5 Günter Rodolfo Kusch (1922-1979) is best known as an unorthodox philosopher who has been lately embraced as a decolonial thinker in Argentina, and to a lesser extent throughout Latin America. Since 2000, he has become better known to the English-reading public, due in part to the efforts of scholars and critics who have championed his work (Castro-Klarén, 2011; Mignolo, 2010; Peña, 2022; Rivara 2016), and in part to the English translation by María Lugones and me (Kusch 2010), which made it more widely available to that public.
- 6 Kusch was born in Buenos Aires to German immigrants and grew up in a middle-class urban milieu. At the Universidad de Buenos Aires, he studied philosophy, especially the work of Martin Heidegger. After graduating, he worked for a time in the Ministry of Education, and in the 1950s earned some recognition as a playwright. Over the course of his career, Kusch taught at various universities, including the Universidad de Buenos Aires and later at the Universidad Nacional de Salta in the Northeast and other provincial universities in the Argentinean Andes and Bolivia. After the military coup and the violent

imposition of military law in 1976, Kusch opted to leave Buenos Aires for the village of Maimará in the Quebrada de Humahuaca, the Province of Jujuy, in the Northeast. He died a scant three years later, in 1979.

- 7 Kusch's philosophical outlook evolved in the 1950s through a series of field trips to the Andes in Northern Argentina and Southern Bolivia. He ventured out into the countryside, striking up conversations in open-air markets, in villages, and on farms with *campesinos* and other rural people, especially people of Indigenous descent. Over time, he formalized this dialogic form of philosophical fieldwork into a methodology that he then practiced throughout his life—using chance encounters as entry points to write on language, epistemology, aesthetics, non-Western logics, and ontology.
- 8 Starting with his *La seducción de la barbarie: Análisis herético de un continente mestizo* (1953), Kusch began to grapple with the legacies of Indigenous thinking, and with worldviews that seemed to follow logics fundamentally different from the European philosophical canon in which he had been trained, but which nevertheless appeared to pervade all spheres of his society—and the continent at large. This was followed by *América profunda* (2000, originally published in 1962), *Indios, porteños y dioses* (1966b), *De la mala vida porteña* (1966a), and the book María Lugones and I translated, *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977, originally published in 1970), in addition to other publications. In this body of work, he tried to craft the basis for a way of doing philosophy that is ultimately rooted in Indigenous worldviews and metaphysics but that finds its way in fractured form in the lives of urban people in Latin America, even those who receive a Western education and who seem to be otherwise socialized into and willing to adopt Western values and ways of thinking and acting. Based on this work, Kusch has been characterized as a “philosopher of decolonization and liberation” (filósofo de la liberación y de la descolonización) (Rivara, 2016, p. 2, my translation), a “de-colonial” thinker (Mignolo, 2010, pp. xxiii, xxxv–xxxvi), “one of the key figures of Pensamiento latinoamericano [Latin American thought]” (Peña, 2022, p. 1), and “a pioneer in the effort to understand indigenous thought from within its own matrix” (Castro-Klarén, 2011, p. 426).

- 9 Kusch's growing interest in and engagement with Indigenous thinking gradually made him quite critical of the middle-class milieu in which he grew up and the Eurocentric pieties he felt it upheld. His critique conforms neither to orthodoxies of the traditional left nor to those of the traditional right. In *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América*, which was first published in 1970, Kusch is iconoclastic to the point of cynicism, rejecting social science, Marxism, and other theoretical and methodological paradigms that would have been popular in the restive days of the 1960s and 1970s among urban intellectuals, liberal-minded reformers, as well as progressives in Argentina, throughout Latin America and beyond. For instance, he argues in the introduction that:

Cuestionarios, materialismo dialéctico, educación pública, sufragio universal o valores espirituales son los slogans de una América activa, pero que en el fondo no pasa de ser sino el pensamiento de una clase media emprendedora, situada en las ciudades de la costa del continente. Frente a ellas se da un pueblo relativamente inerte y hostil o un indígena segregado, que pareciera resistir esa acción. Además, los ideales arriba mencionados son distintos aspectos del pensamiento de una burguesía en crisis, en la cual incluyo gustosamente el más extremista de los revolucionarios utópicos, así como el progresista más emprendedor. Uno y otro son segregados—y la historia lo demuestra—por algo que alienta dentro mismo, del continente. (Kusch, 1977, p. 12).

Questionnaires, dialectical Marxism, public education, universal suffrage, or spiritual values are the slogans of an active América, but at base they are nothing but the thinking of an enterprising middle class, situated in the coastal cities of the continent. Opposed to them stand a relatively inert and hostile pueblo, or segregated Indigenous people, who seem to resist that active posture. Besides, the ideals mentioned above are different aspects of the thinking of a bourgeoisie in crisis, in which I gladly include the most extreme of utopian revolutionaries as well as the most enterprising of progressives. The one and the other are segregated—and history shows this—from and by something that breathes within the continent itself. (Kusch, 2010, p. lxxvi)

- 10 Kusch is unsparing in his contempt for the Latin American middle class, including its most revolutionary elements, suggesting that they

live an existence alienated from the larger community. The enterprising middle class ignores something that lives within the core of *all* inhabitants of the hemisphere. That 'something' is the chief subject of the book, and, arguably, his entire oeuvre. As the middle class strives for political and social solutions that come from Europe (universal suffrage, public education, even utopian revolution), they repress everything that represents Indigenous thinking or ways of being. For Kusch, this sets up an internal clash which he illustrates by describing how philosophy is studied in Latin American universities versus how it is lived in everyday life:

En materia de filosofía tenemos en América, por una parte, una forma oficial de tratarla y, por la otra, una forma, por decir así, privada de hacerlo. Por un lado está la que aprendemos de la universidad y que consiste en una problemática europea traducida a nivel filosófico y, por el otro, un pensar implícito vivido cotidianamente en la calle o en el campo. (Kusch, 1977, p. 15)

In América we treat philosophy in one of two ways, an official way and a private way. From the university we learn of a European problematic translated philosophically. The other is an implicit way of thinking lived every day in the street or in the countryside. (Kusch, 2010, p. 1)

- 11 Studying a European problematic translated from across the Atlantic leads to sterile philosophy and inauthentic ways of being, Kusch argues, and so he chooses to focus on the philosophy of everyday life since, for him, every philosophical system corresponds or should correspond to a form of life:

Cuando Kant enuncia su teoría del conocimiento, lo hace porque en ese momento era imprescindible. Lo mismo ocurre con Hegel, quien expresa el sentir íntimo de la burguesía alemana de su tiempo. Descartes había pensado su *cogito, ergo sum*, porque así lo exigía el siglo de Richelieu con su razón de estado. El pensar europeo, como bien lo demostró Dilthey, siempre se vinculó a un estilo de vida. (Kusch, 1977, pp. 15–16)

When Kant enunciates his theory of knowledge, he does so because it was necessary at that moment. The same is true of Hegel, who

expresses the intimate feeling of the German bourgeoisie of his time. Descartes had thought his *cogito ergo sum* because the century of Richelieu, with its reason of state, demanded it. European thinking, as Dilthey has so ably demonstrated, always linked itself to a way of life. (Kusch, 2010, p. 1)

- 12 Kusch thinks philosophy as it is taught, studied and practiced in América should be closer to the realities of América. “Clearly”, he states, “the issue is not to negate Western philosophy, but to look for a formulation closer to our own lives” (Claro está que no se trata de negar la filosofía occidental, pero sí de buscar un planteo más próximo a nuestra vida) (Kusch, 2010, p. 1/Kusch, 1977, p. 15). He does not seek to offer an alternative philosophy purified of European elements or free of European influence. At this late stage in transnational and global exchanges, this is not possible nor desirable. Nevertheless, he offers a narrative that is critical of taking up European problems of philosophy through an unthinking universalism, writing that is *recherché*, or dedication to philosophical topics that are rarefied or irrelevant.

Si nuestro papel como clase media intelectual es el de regir el pensamiento de una nación, tenemos realmente la libertad de asumir cualquier filosofía? ¿Cuál es, en suma, nuestra misión? ¿Consistirá en representar y tamizar el sentir profundo de nuestro pueblo o consiste simplemente en incrustarnos en su periferia detentando especialidades que nuestro pueblo no requiere? Evidentemente ésta es la paradoja que plantea el quehacer filosófico cuando se lo toma en profundidad. (Kusch, 1977, p. 22)

If our role as middle class intellectuals is to lead the thinking of a nation, do we really have the freedom to adopt any philosophy? In sum, what is our mission? Will it consist in representing and sifting through the depth of the sensibility of our people, or does it consist simply in lodging ourselves in its periphery, retaining specializations our people do not require? Evidently, this is the paradox that the philosophical task poses when it is taken in its depth. (Kusch, 2010, p. 6)

- 13 Kusch then proceeds to describe his own method, modelling himself on a contemporary intellectual of note—the influential historian and

critic Miguel León-Portilla.

Mucho más importante que el instrumental extranjero me pareció el trabajo del mejicano León-Portilla sobre la filosofía náhuatl. Considero que este autor brinda un método muy claro, aunque traté de ampliarlo con el trabajo de campo, no sólo por la ausencia de textos quechuas y aymaras, sino también para verificar las observaciones hechas a raíz del análisis de los pocos himnos quechuas que se conservan. (Kusch, 1977, p. 13)

Much more important than the foreign instrument is the work of the Mexican León-Portilla on Náhuatl philosophy. I think this author offers us a very clear method—although I have tried to widen it with fieldwork. I have done so not only because of the absence of Quechua and Aymara texts, but also to verify the observations made as a result of the analysis of the few Quechua hymns that have been preserved. (Kusch, 2010, p. lxxvii)

- 14 Miguel León-Portilla (1922-2019) was a rigorous and gifted researcher who fashioned philological and exegetical tools that generations of researchers in several fields continue to use and build upon. He combined philological work with translation to study Nahua people's world view and thought (*pensamiento*), as he put it in one of his most cited works (León-Portilla, 1990, p. vii, also see 2015, 2007). León-Portilla offered a nuanced reading of Nahua culture as well as its linguistic legacies, and the body of scholarship he produced has led to a wider embrace of Nahua culture and the Nahuatl language in contemporary Mexico as well as among Mexican-Americans, or Chicanxs. Methodologically, and this must have inspired Kusch, León-Portilla combined techniques from various disciplines, drawing on archaeological methods as he deciphered the pictographs left on ruins of the Aztec empire, poring over the codices and other manuscripts left by Nahua intellectuals and scribes, and studying the manuscripts of noted colonial missionaries such as Bernardino de Sahagún (León-Portilla, 1999).
- 15 Trained as a philosopher rather than as a linguist or historian, Kusch nevertheless also draws on colonial-era texts (especially *vocabularios* or early missionary glossaries of Indigenous languages) and on first-hand examination of monuments such as the Bennett Monolith. He

took the unusual step (for a philosopher) of conducting research in a way that resembles what ethnographers would call participant-observation: observing shamanic rituals, interviewing Ceferino Choque, a shaman or witch doctor, and Apaza Rimachi, whom he describes as a blind witch from Tiahuanaco, as well as other *yatiris* (shamans or witch doctors), *curanderos* (healers) and *brujos* (witches), noting interactions he found revealing. Some of these interactions took place in Spanish, or at least the Spanish inflected by Quechua as it is spoken throughout the Andes, while others were primarily conducted in Quechua or Aymara; in the latter case, Kusch relied on an interpreter. This kind of material is usually considered more the domain of linguists, anthropologists and folklorists than philosophers. Kusch also visited archaeological sites and from these visits he elaborated novel interpretations of pre-Columbian ruins in Southern Bolivia and Northern Argentina. He noted how Indigenous cosmogonies are evident in the layout of stone shrines, the iconography rendered on ancient monoliths, and the renowned pictographs of the sixteenth-century itinerant Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala. He used these sources of qualitative evidence to explore the ontological, temporal, spatial and epistemic dimensions of Quechua and Aymara thinking and the presence of their cosmologies in everyday practices such as making agricultural decisions on water use, ritualistically reading coca leaves, and deciding whether to take a journey. Significantly, Kusch saw how these Indigenous elements of language and belief emerged in fragmentary form in contemporary popular speech in cities, among both the middle and working class, and this led him to argue that Indigenous roots lie at the core of popular culture, even when these Indigenous roots are suppressed or denied.

- 16 These methods are consistent with Kusch's goal of uncovering a philosophy as it is lived on the streets and in the countryside. As he develops his argument in *Indigenous and Popular Thinking* (Kusch, 2010), he narrates these relatively mundane encounters that he presents as evidence or as points of departure for his larger narrative about being and thinking in the Americas. Kusch's reliance on common turns of phrase and everyday conversations has been noted by several scholars. Walter Mignolo, for instance, characterizes Kusch's "philosophical method" as drawing "from anecdotes and

verbal expressions, from Aymara (mainly) and other languages' vocabularies (*dichos y decires populares*)"and suggests that he "derives, infers, interprets the philosophically unsaid in the expression or the anecdote" (Mignolo, 2010, p. xxviii). Kusch sifts through these popular sayings, stories he hears, retelling of myths, and anecdotes he recounts to see what they can tell him about Indigenous realities.

- 17 Kusch developed this method in order to engage Indigenous ways of thinking. Through his fieldwork, he tries to enter into the "rhythmic" thinking, as he puts it, that beats in the heart of América. In other words, this work of philosophy does not take the form of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, a systematic philosophical treatise, nor is it an ethnographic portrait. Instead, Kusch builds a bridge, or, better, a tunnel—burrowing or sensing his way in. Thus, Kusch sees his project not so much as a means of *representing* Indigenous or popular thinking, but rather as a laneway he provides, or an opening he is forging, with the aim of rescuing or retrieving that which had been left behind, the shattered and splintered residua after five centuries of colonial depredation.

- 18 At the centre of this project is the question of being (*estar*):

A su vez, no podía estar ausente en este trabajo el esbozo de un pensamiento americano que gire en torno al concepto del *estar*. Creo que dicho término logra concretar el verdadero estilo de vida de nuestra América, en la cual entrarían blancos y pardos, y ofrece, desde un punto de vista fenomenológico, una inusitada riqueza. Va implícito en dicho término esa peculiaridad americana a partir de la cual recién habremos de ganar, si cabe, nuestro verdadero lugar, y no esa penosa universalidad que todos pretendemos esgrimir inútilmente. (Kusch, 1977, pp. 13–14)

What could not be absent in this work is a sketch of an American thinking that turns on the concept of *estar*. I believe this term succeeds in concretizing the true way of life of our América, including white and brown people alike, and offers an unexpected richness from a phenomenological point of view. Implicit in this term is that American peculiarity which could ground our reaching our true place, rather than that burdensome universality to which we all pointlessly aspire. (Kusch, 2010, p. lxxvii)

- 19 Kusch sets up a particular understanding of *estar* (to be) at the core of a “way of life” that is particular or peculiar to América. He finds in this common verb what makes Indigenous philosophy qualitatively different from conventional philosophy as it is studied in Buenos Aires or Berlin. “I insist”, he says, “on the opposition between the urban and the Indigenous styles of thinking” (*hice especial hincapié en la oposición entre el estilo de pensar del ciudadano y del indígena*) (Kusch, 2010, p. lxvii/Kusch, 1997, p. 13). Later, he concretizes this distinction thus:

La distancia real que media entre un pensar indígena y un pensar acorde con la filosofía tradicional, es la misma que media entre el término aymara *utcatha* y el término alemán *Da-sein*. Heidegger toma esta palabra del alemán popular, en primer término porque *Sein* significa *ser*, con lo cual podía retomar la temática de la ontología tradicional, y en segundo término, porque *Da*, que significa *ahí*, señalaba la *circunstancia* en que había caído el ser. (Kusch, 1977, p. 20)

The real distance between an Indigenous way of thinking and a way of thinking consistent with traditional philosophy is the same as that between the Aymara term *utcatha* and the German term *Da-sein*. Heidegger takes up this word from ordinary German speech, first because *Sein* signifies *being* (*ser*)—which allowed him to take up again the themes of traditional ontology—and second because *Da*—which means “there”—signaled the *circumstance* into which being had fallen. (Kusch, 2010, p. 4)

- 20 For Kusch, Heidegger’s philosophy belongs to a German middle class of his time and place:

Su mérito consiste en haber retomado en el siglo xx el tema de ser en una dimensión exacta, tal como en realidad la vivía la clase media alemana, la cual siempre sintió como propia esa caída del ser, con todas sus implicaciones angustiosas. Si a ella agregamos los conceptos de tiempo y de autenticidad, advertimos que una temática así hilvanada, no dista del pensamiento propio de una burguesía europea que siente la crisis del individuo y que trata de remediarla. (Kusch, 1977, p. 20)

[Heidegger's] merit lies in having taken up in the twentieth century the theme of being with an exactitude that befitted the lives of the German middle class. This class had always felt the fall of being as its own, with all of the anguish that implies. If we add to it the concepts of time and authenticity, we notice that a thematic so threaded is not so far from the thinking of a European bourgeoisie which feels the crisis of the individual and tries to remedy it. (Kusch, 2010, p. 4)

- 21 Using the same logic, Kusch seeks to carve out a space for a philosophy that corresponds to the phenomenology of the everyday in Indigenous América, and in broader stroke throughout América, albeit in fragmentary form:

Pero mucho más propio del sentir indígena sería el término *utcatha*. Según el mismo autor [Bertonio] significa “estar”. [...] En suma, se trata de un término cuyas acepciones reflejan el concepto de un mero darse o, mejor aún, de un mero *estar*, pero vinculado con el concepto de amparo y de germinación. Ahora bien, es evidente que el sentir profundo de un indio, cuando está en la calle Buenos Aires de La Paz y decide tomar un camión para ir a su *ayllu*, ha de ser en términos de *utcatha* y no de *Da-sein*. (Kusch, 1977, pp. 20–21).

But the term *utcatha* is much closer to the Indigenous sensibility. Bertonio translates *utcatha* as “estar”. [...]. The meanings of *utcatha* reflect the concept of a mere givenness or, even better, of a mere *estar*, but linked to the concept of shelter and germination. The depth of feeling of an Indian when he is on Buenos Aires Street in La Paz and decides to take a bus to his *ayllu* must be understood in terms of *utcatha* and not *Da-sein*. (Kusch, 2010, p. 5)

- 22 As is clear in this citation from our English translation, we preserved *estar* (to be) in our translation and we preserved the accent *é* in *América* in the book title and throughout. We wanted to offer these concepts as an opening into Kusch's thinking, influenced by his own method. As Kusch remarks in an early passage:

Pero no podía quedar el trabajo limitado únicamente a la exhumación del pensamiento indígena. Considero que este pensamiento nos abre la comprensión de los problemas americanos y, por consiguiente, la

segunda parte del libro está dedicada a medir las posibilidades que dicho pensamiento ofrece. (Kusch, 1977, p. 13)

But I could not limit this work to exhuming Indigenous thinking. I think this thinking opens our understanding of the problems of América; thus, the second part of the book is devoted to weighing the possibilities this thinking offers. (Kusch, 2010, p. lxvii)

- 23 We wanted our translation to embody these possibilities, these contingent futures for an América that has the potential to break apart or dismantle a sense of reality as stable and uniform. Kusch characterized Indigenous thinking as seminal, in the sense of generative and dynamic, and he wanted to capture a reality that was always subject to a *vuelco*, or *kuty*—that is, to a cosmic shift or revolution. Influenced by his philosophical method as much as by the way he linked thinking with being, we wanted to translate his text, and the key concepts he chose to engage with, in a way that was consistent with the insights he provided rather than simply render Spanish words into English as a semantic task. The latter project would have in any case proved difficult, not only because Kusch moved between Quechua, Aymara and Spanish, but also because the conceptual interpretation of popular speech he engages in has no counterpart in the dominant modalities of Anglophone speech and perception. Instead, we thought, the translation should act as an opening in a metaphorical fence between Spanish, Quechua and Aymara on the one hand, and English on the other, an opening that can allow words and concepts to move back and forth among these different worlds. What this entailed in practice was preserving words or concepts from the original in select cases. As we recontextualized these key concepts in our English-language text, they inevitably took on new nuance and meaning. *América* in an English text means something different from *América* in a Spanish text, as I explain in more detail below.
- 24 There is a long tradition of translators refusing to offer smooth, seamless texts for easy consumption by the target audience, even though the contemporary aesthetic for English readers at least seems to demand just that kind of easy-to-assimilate text. This refusal by translators to meet the expectations of their audience can have different motivations, including the desire to bring the reader closer

to the writer's worldview, to paraphrase Schleiermacher (Schleiermacher, 1992, p. 6). Lawrence Venuti famously termed this technique "foreignization" (Venuti, 2008). A foreignized text draws attention to itself and in the best of cases can momentarily arrest the attention of a reader, even defamiliarize them with the conventions and norms of their language and make them reflect on the experience of reading. At worst, as Antoine Berman has pointed out, the resulting text will lean toward the unintelligible (1992, p. 4). Our own strategy to navigate this dilemma was to try and bring the reader along to new horizons, to signal to the reader that they were reading a text originally written in Spanish, and one that they would have to work to understand, while we tried to ease that passage by glossing key terms and explaining their constellation.

- 25 I characterized translating Kusch's text as breaching a fence between languages to bring a reader to new horizons. In this approach to translation, the languages are not regarded as distinct and discontinuous with one another, but rather as part of a larger ecology on which a border has been imposed. The border can be torn asunder or opened, thus linking the languages separated by it. This understanding of language and translation is akin to translanguaging,² an approach where languages are not treated as discreet and separate, but rather are brought together to form a repertoire of words and phrases, where the distinction between them is understood as an ideological construct (García & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011). Translanguaging is thus a way of articulating new realities, new ways of being and acting in evolving social, cultural and political contexts, as Creese et al. put it (2018, p. 26). It refers to

new language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories, and releases histories and understandings that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nation-states. (García & Wei, 2014, p. 21)

- 26 Translanguaging is the enactment of language practices which "use different features that had previously been independently constrained by different histories, but which now are experienced in speakers' interactions as one new whole" (Creese et al., 2018, p. 27).

- 27 As translators, we came to this project with a recognition of how English and Spanish are already connected in myriad ways—by geography, by history, and most of all, by agile users of language whose continued creativity forms the basis for García's (2009) notion of translanguaging. In a curious way, this approach to the translation also paid homage to the original, since Kusch's original text similarly combines different languages (Aymara, Quechua, Spanish) and registers—from the colloquial Spanish spoken in Latin America, including popular sayings and expressions, to the rarefied language of philosophy and linguistics, including the specialized vocabulary used to discuss Heidegger, Kant, and Whorf in Spanish.
- 28 We developed a more nuanced sense of which of Kusch's key concepts needed to stay in Spanish and which we could translate, and how, from our own version of translation fieldwork. We retraced Kusch's steps in the Andes and got to know people in Maimará, in the North of Argentina, where Kusch lived the final years of his life, and where his widow still resided. Through extended stays, we took better measure of the worlds he encountered while living there. The next section describes our background research in more detail.

Researching and translating Kusch

- 29 In 2003, María Lugones invited me to co-translate Rodolfo Kusch's *El pensamiento indígena y popular*. I accepted the invitation, and in order to understand the context of Kusch's work, including his observation of interactions with people in the Argentinean and Bolivian Andes and his remarks on rituals and the use of common speech, we decided to do some preliminary background research. We conducted field research for several months in Jujuy, in the Puna of Argentina, in the altiplano or high Andean plateau, near the border with Bolivia. Through several research stays in Jujuy, we were able to ask philosophers as well as everyday rural people how they understand concepts that were key for Kusch: concepts such as *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), *kuty* (the turning over of the universe), and *utcatha* (which Kusch connects with being, dwelling and germination).³ Spending several months in Jujuy allowed us to visit some of the sites Kusch visited, observe the type of rituals he observed, speak to philo-

sopher Mario Vilca, a Kusch expert from the Puna, Lucila Bugallo, an anthropologist, as well as various *curanderos* and *curanderas* (healers), and participate in daily Andean life—from the kitchen to the marketplace. Our experiences deepened our understanding of Kusch's project and answered many of the riddles we had to solve as translators of his text.

- 30 I was not uncritical of the text we were translating. Given Kusch's propensity to use 400-year-old colonial-era glossaries and bilingual dictionaries (*vocabularios*), I suspected his knowledge of Quechua and Aymara might have been spotty. Elizabeth Lanata, Kusch's widow, confirmed as much. As a linguistic anthropologist, I found Kusch's practice of relying on these dictionaries flawed. For example, he does not seem to take into account the fact that Quechua and Aymara as languages have evolved since the colonial era, or that the Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, as assiduous as they may have been, might have been unreliable lexicographers (Price, 2023, pp. 23–52). A philosopher who does linguistic analysis, comparative philology and fieldwork, Kusch engages in other practices that would also raise eyebrows among anthropologists. He draws connections across time (five centuries) and space (from the North of Argentina to various points in Bolivia and even to the Hopi in what is now the United States) in the use of ritual and symbol in a way that many contemporary ethnographers might find hasty or haphazard. At other points we had trouble working out his logic, including his exploration of numerology, and how he associates different ruins in ways we found esoteric.
- 31 Vigilance was thus warranted. Yet one can lose the forest for the trees. Kusch's methodological innovation of doing fieldwork as a philosopher, for example, is inspiring. Similarly, his discussion of the instability of the cosmos in the Quechua worldview and the corresponding necessity for ritual action to try and stave off the *kuty*, or an overturn in the cosmos, is compelling. One must propitiate the *Pachamama* or she may swallow you. I found this striking, given the idealized portrait of Indigenous life that is sometimes painted as a harmonious coexistence between Indigenous people and nature. Even if one quibbles with the small things, in other words, Kusch's most basic motivation is to reach for an *Américan* thinking that is not

contained by European thought, and this we believed was a worthwhile endeavour that needed to be captured in the translation.

- 32 Deciding whether to translate key concepts meant we had to be clear about the context of translation: were we going to treat Latin America as a land apart and translate the Spanish, Aymara and Quechua across the linguistic border? Or were we going to try and build a bridge, treating an Anglophone audience as part of the larger project that Kusch may have had in mind? This was a metapragmatic consideration in the sense that it was about deciding on the context for the translation. In the end, we decided to keep the key words in the original language since translating them could, we felt, stunt Kusch's ambition and his careful exegesis of the core concepts intended to channel the reader into the unstable reality he thought characterized the everyday in América.
- 33 Marilyn Gaddis-Rose has suggested that translations of literary texts can, in effect, be a form of literary criticism (1998, p. 7), a critical interpretation of a work of literature. In applying her understanding of the translation of poetry and fiction to the translation of philosophy and the human sciences more generally, I am extending her argument: translating concepts elaborated in academic texts, I would argue, involves actively interpreting these concepts, building on them, lending them an afterlife, in Walter Benjamin's famous phrase (Price, 2008). Translating concepts from Latin American philosophy, moreover, is a form of analysis from which new narratives of modernity can emerge. In other words, translating is, or can be, a means of constructing new narratives, or of revealing existing ones to a new audience. In the case of Latin American philosophy, a translation can also provide the necessary scaffolding for these alternative narratives of modernity to circulate and prosper in new environments.
- 34 The translator's task of midwifing narratives, including new narratives, can be aided by paratextual activities such as the convention of prefacing a translated book with a translator's introduction, glossing, footnoting, writing reviews and stand-alone academic articles (including the present one) and providing interviews. Paratextual material of this type allows translators to act as cultural brokers, contextualizing Latin American philosophy for a new audience, parti-

cipating in the cultural and linguistic refraction of a text (Lefevere, 2000) from one language ecology to another—even, at the margins, participating in entwining those ecologies together through various processes of knowledge transfer (Guzmán, 2020).

- 35 Adapting Gaddis-Rose's (1998) method of reading a translation alongside its original, I will now focus on a number of core concepts in Kusch's philosophy. My analysis of these concepts is reflected in the translation, and it is intended to promote new narratives that highlight the interdependence as well as the conflict and tensions between Eurocentric knowledge and the type of thinking emerging from Latin America, with Kusch as a leading example of the latter. These alternative narratives are manifest in the translation and further elaborated on in our "Translators' Introduction" (Lugones & Price, 2010).

América

- 36 *América* is a common word in Latin America, but we were unable to find a fair equivalent in English. One obvious translation, *America*, we rejected out of hand, given that *America* denotes the United States in most contexts. Indeed, through a strange kind of linguistic imperialism, the United States seems to have arrogated the word *America* to itself. It has done the same with the *United States*: Mexico is also officially named the "United Mexican States" but is hardly ever referred to as such—only as "Mexico". As my co-translator once pointed out to me, the United States of America arguably has no name that does not in itself enact or represent a kind of imperialism.
- 37 Kusch also occasionally uses the terms *sudamericano* and *latinoamericano*, among others, but he most often uses *América* and at times its adjectival form, *americano*, which is consistent with his emphasis on the Indigenous presence throughout the hemisphere. *The Americas* might have worked as a translation for *América*, but we were concerned that this would still have framed the continent within a kind of European or Eurocentric view of the world. *Latin America* would have emphasized Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking perspectives whereas Kusch clearly wished to centre Indigenous peoples throughout the continent, including the Hopi, Navajo, and others in the Northern part of the continent. Had he been

writing today, Kusch might have used the increasingly popular *Abya Yala*, but that term was not as common with non-Indigenous writers in the early 1970s.

- 38 *América* with an accent had several advantages. Keeping the Spanish term signalled to the reader that the text was a translation, and secondly, it defamiliarized the term, the language, and the continent for the English-language reader in a salubrious way. Retaining the accent in an English language context is a provocation, as it draws attention to the contrast between a conventional geography of the continent and what *América* could portend. Where Kusch was simply using the conventional Spanish word to refer to the continent, the accent in English conferred a new and unexpected nuance, we hoped. *América* does not refer to a given geographic entity, much less a nation or a geo-political formation. It recuperates the past and present even as it leans towards the future. Kusch's vision of *América* unearths half-buried forms of life from within urban and rural habitats that draw on the rhythmic thinking and thousand cosmologies of Indigenous nations that snake their way through contemporary life. These ways of living and thinking are nonetheless marked by the erosion brought on by waves of settler colonialism over the last five centuries. *América* is impure and unstable—it is a contingent possibility, it is incipient, not a fully realized place.
- 39 Retaining the accent makes the exercise reflexive, since *América*, as I believe Kusch intended it, challenges the boundaries that mark where one language, identity, or nation ends and another begins. It troubles the linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries among Anglophone, Lusophone, Francophone, Indigenous, and Spanish speakers, as well as speakers of various patois, creoles, and Papiamentu throughout the hemisphere. Maintaining *América* in Spanish—or, framed differently, bringing it into English with an accent—loops us into a hermeneutical circle.

Pulcritud vs. hedor

- 40 If *América*, as a concept, signals an alternative narrative of geography, the distinction between *pulcritud* and *hedor* provides an alternative narrative along the axis of aesthetics and urban design, and the distinction between *ser* and *estar* an alternative ontological narrative.

- 41 In *América Profúnda* (2000), another work by Rodolfo Kusch that has not yet been translated, Kusch observes that a line runs down the centre of the continent between *pulcritud* and *hedor*. Despite the terms' originating in a book other than the one we translated, I include them here because I believe they complement the other concepts and distinctions we grappled with, and because they provide further insight into the narrative Kusch elaborated and the trajectory of his thought over the course of his many books. I have also begun to translate this book into English. The distinction between *pulcritud* and *hedor* could be rendered loosely in English as contrasting order, cleanliness and neatness with stench, stink or pestilential odour. For Kusch, this contrast marks the distinction between modernity and the connotations of Indigeneity, where Indigenous people are often described by a (racist) dominant culture as smelly or stinking. It should go without saying that the distinction is imagined rather than real. Yet it informs people's individual perceptions—it is a visceral, phenomenological reaction to the supposed stench of the subaltern. But also, clearly, modernity and the search for order (*pulcritud*) and discipline in Latin America encompass nation-building projects, economic programmes and development schemes.⁴
- 42 Rodolfo Kusch draws the distinction between *pulcritud* and *hedor* in order to cover a wide range of phenomena of I/Other relations that mark the conventional relationship between the urban middle-class and its others (such as the urban underclass, the rural, people of the African diaspora, and Indigenous): “the streets stink, they stink of the beggar, and so does the old Indian [sic: “la vieja india”] who speaks to us but we understand nothing she says, just as it's true that we are clean and orderly” (las calles hieden, que hiede el mendigo y la india vieja [sic], que nos habla sin que entendamos nada, como es cierta, también, nuestra extrema pulcritud)⁵ (Kusch, 2000, p. 16). This is a psycho-social phenomenon for Kusch: “the truth is we're afraid, a fear of not knowing how to call all of this that is irritating us, that is outside and that makes us feel vulnerable and trapped” (La verdad es que temenos miedo, el miedo de no saber cómo llamar todo eso que nos acosa y que está afuera y que nos hace sentir indefensos y atrapados) (Kusch, 2000, p. 11). By invoking a “we”, Kusch is criticizing a social class—city-dwellers from the middle-class—in which he

includes himself. From that insider perspective, he uncovers and denounces the psychological impulse to push away or quell that which cannot be contained by oneself. Calling oneself clean and orderly is a way of calming that psychic dissonance: “there’s a certain satisfaction in thinking that effectively, we’re clean and that the streets are not, nor is the beggar nor the old Quechua woman” (“Hay cierta satisfacción de pensar que efectivamente estamos limpios y que las calles no lo están, ni el mendigo aquel, ni tampoco la vieja quechua”) (Kusch, 2000, p. 11).

- 43 Kusch writes disparagingly of how this fearful urban middle-class imagines a solution to the problem of the disorder and the miasma of bad smell that emanates from the streets of América:

[...] El borracho de chicha, el indio rezador o el mendigo hediento, será cosa de internarlos, limpiar la calle e instalar baños públicos. La primera solución para los problemas de América apunta siempre a remediar la suciedad e implantar la pulcritud. (Kusch, 2000, p. 13)

If it’s the guy drunk on chicha, the Indian beseeching us or the foul-smelling beggar then it’s nothing other than a question of putting them in prison, cleaning up the street, and installing public bathrooms. The first solution that América always tries is to clean out the squalor and install order.

- 44 The fix to the problems of dirt and disorder is to build more prisons, pick up the garbage, and engage in better urban planning.
- 45 The division between *pulcritud* and *hedor* also operates on the level of language. *Hedor* brings us to a rougher aesthetic. In the context of translation, an aesthetics of *hedor* has an affinity with the notion of textual resistance Lawrence Venuti articulated several decades ago and his parallel ethical injunction to “do wrong at home [...] by deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience” (Venuti, 2008, p. 16). The defamiliarization brought about by the linguistic smuggling of *hedor* into English arrests the eye of the reader, drawing attention to the process of translation, alerting the English-language reader to the textual manipulation exercised by the translation. An *hedor* aesthetics also has some affinity with what Glissant called the right to opacity: “We claim our right to opacity” (Nous

réclamons le droit à l'opacité) (Glissant, 1990, p. 209, my translation). The text need not reveal all the secrets of the writer, it need not yield to an aesthetic of transparency. Transparency can be an oppressive aesthetic. Transparency or the desire for transparency can also be an epistemicidal force, whereas that which is constructed as *hedor* resists the verbal hygiene imposed by *pulcritud*. The *hedor* creeps out from under the imposed order, seeps out through its cracks and forces new cracks, and in this way constantly threatens the *pulcritud*, the colonial linguistic order and hygiene. This is the linguistic conflict that runs through *América* in speech and oral traditions, as well as in writing. It provides the basis for this alternative narrative of modernity, and of an official, superior language.

- 46 Kusch's highlighting of the distinction between *hedor* and *pulcritud* is an attempt at recasting the narrative of modernity in the West and Latin America (and perhaps elsewhere too). If the dominant developmentalist narrative in Latin America is one of the spread of Western reason, literacy, republicanism, representative democracy, progress, linear time, capitalism, Western education, and the imposition of Western binary understandings of gender and sexuality, then the threat of *hedor*, of Indigenous resurgence, challenges and complicates that narrative, since it eschews many of the nostrums typically woven into narratives of progress. It also complicates the conventional framing of politics as a left-right continuum. Kusch constructs an alternative framing of modernity. He examines the contours of European thought and explains how, from that Eurocentric point of view, *América* is wretched and hapless. But from within the *hedor*, from within the view of the streets or that which is Black or Indigenous or working-class, the urge to cleanliness and order rests on a psycho-social preoccupation with resolving inner conflict into an obsession with developmental projects and goals that are, at root, just a form of suppressing the existential instability that is also a cosmic instability. Rather than dwelling on that moment of psychological uncertainty and discomfort and confronting the inherent social volatility, societies and individuals motivated by an urge for *pulcritud* try to find technological fixes or political solutions—whether Marxist, technocratic, Chicago School economics, or any number of alternatives.

Ser vs. estar

- 47 The last example concerns a philosophical distinction that rests on a linguistic category. In Spanish, *ser* and *estar* are usually translated as forms of the verb “to be”. As elementary students of Spanish conventionally learn, *ser* refers to permanent or existential statements (“I am tall”), and *estar* to accidental, circumstantial or temporary conditions (“I am sad”). They are both as common in Spanish as the verb “to be” in English—in other words, they are basic building blocks of speaking and writing and provide the girding for language, action, existential statements, identity claims, descriptions, referring and predicating, and so on.
- 48 Kusch attaches considerable weight to the distinction between these two verbs and gives it a peculiarly Latin American twist, tied to Indigenous ontologies.

Es curioso que el castellano marginal que se habla en Sudamérica, especialmente cuando se quiere hablar bien, resulta excesiva y sospechosamente decantado, hasta el punto de que este último termina por ser sumamente incómodo. Por ejemplo, una expresión como yo soy, siempre va acompañada de cierto esfuerzo, por el cual lo, que se es, está pegado al sujeto y afirmado enfáticamente. Además, nunca se es totalmente médico. (Kusch, 1977, p. 251)

It is odd that the marginal Spanish spoken in South América, particularly when one wants to speak properly, becomes excessively and suspiciously qualified, to the point that it becomes very cumbersome. For example, though an expression such as *I am* is always accompanied by a certain effort, so that what one is is glued to the subject and emphatically affirmed, one never is totally what the predicate expresses. (Kusch, 2010, p. 158)

- 49 For Kusch, whose goal, after all, is to reveal Indigenous and popular thinking in América, the distinction marks an ontological contrast between, on the one hand, a Western conceptualization of subject-object relations, corresponding to *ser*, in which the world is fixed, definable, knowable, and subject to the laws of cause and effect, and,

on the other hand, an “unstable relation among the elements of the cosmos”, signified by *estar* (Lugones & Price, 2010, p. lviii). It is important to underscore that Kusch’s central claim is that the grammatical distinction in Spanish between *ser* and *estar* has taken on a special significance in Latin American popular usage. As I showed above, Kusch ties *estar*, as used in América, to the Aymara term *utcatha*, and thus to an Aymara ontology. He implies that this grammatical distinction performs a particular function in Latin America that it does not necessarily perform in the Spanish spoken in Spain or elsewhere. Kusch uses as an example the popular expression *estar/estoy trabajando* (“to be working/I am working”) instead of *yo trabajo* (“I work”). He suggests that this routine usage in América captures a tentative, protean subject in a shifting, unstable universe, “as if whatever one is doing were the momentary product of a great instability which hovers in an unseen background” (como si aquello en que se anda fuera el producto momentáneo de una gran inestabilidad que se cierne en un trasfondo que no se ve) (Kusch, 2010, p. 159/Kusch, 1997, p. 251). He also ties this reliance on *estar* to the Quechua notion of the *kuty*, or what he calls, following Guamán Poma de Ayala and others, *Pachakuti*, the *vuelco*, the turning over of the universe. For the Quechua, the history of the planet and the universe is marked by five great ages, each of which ended with a *kuty* of cataclysmic remaking of the cosmos. The universe, and the planet, the *Pachamama*, or Mother Earth, remains subject to this cosmic instability, where everything and anything can be lost, swallowed, annihilated or overturned. The second half of Kusch’s book, and especially its crescendo, is concerned with elaborating this distinction and this quality of instability as it emerges in popular speech in Argentina and, by extension, throughout the rest of the Spanish-speaking and Indigenous parts of the continent.

Esto coincide con la característica argentina, por no decir americana, que pareciera consistir en sumergir todo lo que es estable dentro de la circunstancia, como si aquello en que se anda fuera el producto momentáneo de una gran inestabilidad que se cierne en un trasfondo que no se ve. Un gobierno recién instalado es siempre inestable, lo que se tiene también es inestable, y aun la opinión propia va acompañada por la disculpa del *me parece a mí*. En general se

sumerge lo estable en lo inestable, o sea que se puebla el mundo de circunstancias, y se reduce lo que es a lo que *está*. (Kusch, 1977, p. 251)

This [use of the verb *estar*] coincides with the Argentinean and, even more widely, Américan characteristic, which seems to consist in submerging everything stable within circumstance, as if whatever one is doing were the momentary product of a great instability which hovers in an unseen background. A recently established government is always unstable, what one owns is also unstable, and one even excuses one's opinion by accompanying it with *it seems to me*. Generally, the stable is submerged in the unstable, that is, the world is populated by circumstances, and what is reduced to what *está*. (Kusch, 2010, pp. 158–159)

- 50 Being dwells within circumstance; this Indigenous worldview is not one of harmony with nature. Quite the contrary, people must constantly engage in ritual propitiation of the *Pachamama* as insurance against an overturn or *vuelco*. For Kusch, in other words, this cosmic instability has bubbled up through the colonially imposed Spanish language, inflecting it with an Indigenous sensibility, albeit as broken shards. Glissant would refer to a similar phenomenon as forced poetics. Poetics is forced when a subordinate people tries to push their expression through the colonizer's language (Glissant, 1999, p. 120–121).
- 51 My co-translator María Lugones and I tried to introduce this philosophical distinction in our English translation by preserving *estar* and *ser*, not only because the distinction was key for Kusch, but also because we thought it could be a useful contribution to English-language philosophy. The distinction between *estar* and *ser* provides an alternative narrative of modernity along the axis of cosmology and ontology.

Conclusion

- 52 Kusch longs for an *América* that is potential, not yet real, and that is currently manifest only in fragments. He tries to recuperate an Indigenous thinking that could help realize that vision of *América*. Correspondingly, we sought in our translation to shore up that vision

where current identities and categories may be inadequate or out of sync with what Kusch wants to bring into being (Griffiths, 2012, p. 22).

53 The theory of translation that informs this article assumes that translating texts in the human sciences is a form of doing original social analysis, in this case as critique or critical elaboration of an original text. Translation thus goes beyond merely transposing meaning from one set of signs to another. Translators consciously attempt to reveal the epistemic foundations on which the source relies. Translation in this sense is a creative act to the extent that all critical work, such as literary criticism, art history, or philosophical critique are creative acts.

54 The focus on Latin American thinking, social theory and philosophy allows new narratives to come into being. What emerges from the translation of Kusch's *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* is an alternative narrative to those taken for granted in European and Eurocentric thinking. This alternative narrative begins by describing the emergence of Eurocentric modernity *as seen from Latin America*. *Visión de los vencidos: Relaciones indígenas de la Conquista* is the title of a celebrated historiographic text that is simultaneously a translation of Nahua thought by Miguel León-Portilla (2007). Although the published translation has the title *Broken spears: Aztec accounts of the Conquest of Mexico* (2006), a literal translation might be "The viewpoint of the vanquished: Indigenous accounts of the Conquest". Eurocentric modernity, viewed from the margins (as in León-Portilla's text), posits a split or binary divide between technological innovation, progress, economic advancement, and the lulling comforts of consumerism, on the one hand, and the perceived irrationality, ethnic diversity, and Babel of multilingualism on the other. The complementary narrative, also from within the margins, projects an imaginary of América predicated on a cosmic instability and logics of everyday life that break with positivism, linear reason, Newtonian causality, American pragmatism, the Cartesian divide of mind/body, as well as other dualist ontologies. We viewed the frontier of language as a threshold at which one could cut a hole in the fence—create an opening between languages—rather than a barrier one could only pass through conventional linguistic translation. Selecting a text and translating it is not just a question of aesthetics and semantics, but also of ethics and politics, and even potential futures.

Thus translation—what is selected for translation and how it is translated—can also be a question of epistemic justice.

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NOTES

- 1 In a lengthy review of our translation and Kusch's body of work more generally, Derbyshire argues that Kusch sees Indigeneity itself as a "site of potential" (2010, p. 36).
- 2 The term translanguaging was originally coined by Ofélia García to describe the "language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 2). This approach to language practice for bilingual speakers was based on sociolinguistic analysis, especially of the bilingual classroom (Wei, 2018; García, 2009). The notion of translanguaging is also increasingly being used to theorize multilingualism in written discourse, including translations (Laviosa, 2018; Bennett, 2024; Ostashevsky, 2023).
- 3 I offer these brief glosses as an admittedly problematic shorthand since the complexities of inter-epistemic and inter-ontologic translation are precisely what is at stake in this article.

4 Kusch's insight could be fruitfully applied to all kinds of social phenomena. For example, this quest for a modern sense of order serves as the background desire for the planned capital of Brasília: Oscar Niemeyer was inspired by le Corbusier's scheme for modernist architecture (Holston, 1989). *Pulcritud* is also at the heart of the Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's decision to build some of the largest prisons in the world. Bukele's stated goal is to break the back of Salvadoran gangs such as la Mara Salvatrucha and the Eighteenth Street Gang, which he hopes to contain within his gleaming dystopian penitentiary structures.

5 This and other quotations from Kusch (2000) are my translations.

ABSTRACTS

English

In *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977), philosopher Rodolfo Kusch aims to recuperate a form of thinking he believes lies at the root of the American continent. Thinking in and from the Americas has an ontological dimension for him: *being* in the Americas is different from *being* in Europe, and Kusch ties this ontological distinction to a linguistic and grammatical distinction in Latin American Spanish that does not exist in English (*ser* vs. *estar*). These and other key concepts posed a challenge for my co-translator, the late Maria Lugones, and me as we set out to produce an English translation of Kusch's book. The purpose of this article is to consider how translating challenging concepts of this type can bring world-views and linguistic horizons into new relationships with one another and engender new intellectual narratives and traditions. Moreover, translating concepts can be a means of analyzing or interpreting those concepts (Gaddis Rose, 1998), and is hence a productive exercise in its own right. The article focuses on several concepts that are difficult to translate and that Kusch identifies in Latin American Spanish as his entry points to uncover the bases for an autochthonous *Américan* philosophical tradition. These concepts include *América* (which could be misleadingly translated as "America"); *pulcritud* (order or cleanliness) in contrast to *hedor* (stench) as a binary at the heart of Latin American modernity; and, most of all, the distinction in Spanish between *estar* and *ser*, on which Kusch bases a complex ontological theory informed by Quechua and Aymara thinking.

A synopsis of this article can be found [here](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounter-s-in-translation.548) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounter-s-in-translation.548>).

Français

Dans *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977), le philosophe Rodolfo Kusch vise à récupérer une forme de pensée qu'il croit être à la racine du continent américain. Penser dans et depuis les Amériques a une dimension ontologique pour lui : être dans les Amériques est différent d'être en Europe, et Kusch lie cette distinction ontologique à une distinction linguistique et grammaticale dans l'espagnol latino-américain qui n'existe pas en anglais (*ser vstar*). Cette distinction et d'autres concepts fondamentaux ont constitué un défi pour ma cotraductrice, la regrettée Maria Lugones, et moi-même, lorsque nous avons entrepris de produire une traduction anglaise du livre de Kusch. L'objectif de cet article est d'examiner comment la traduction de concepts difficiles de ce type peut amener les visions du monde et les horizons linguistiques à établir de nouvelles relations entre eux et à engendrer de nouveaux récits et de nouvelles traditions intellectuelles. En outre, la traduction de concepts peut être un moyen de les analyser ou de les interpréter (Gaddis Rose, 1998) et constitue ainsi un exercice productif en soi. L'article se concentre sur plusieurs concepts difficiles à traduire que Kusch identifie dans l'espagnol latino-américain comme ses points d'entrée pour découvrir les bases d'une tradition philosophique *Américan* autochtone. Ces concepts incluent *América* (que l'on pourrait traduire à tort par « Amérique »), *pulcritud* (ordre ou propreté) par opposition à *hedor* (puanteur) en tant que binôme au cœur de la modernité latino-américaine et, surtout, la distinction en espagnol entre *estar* et *ser*, sur laquelle Kusch fonde une théorie ontologique complexe basée sur la pensée quechua et aymara.

Un synopsis de cet article est disponible [ici](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.574) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.574>).

العربية

يسعى الفيلسوف الأرجنتيني رودولفو كوش في كتابه الصادر عام (١٩٧٧) بعنوان: " *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* " إلى إحياء نمط فكري محلي يكمن في القارة الأمريكية، وذلك لاعتقاده بأن التفكير الذي ينشأ داخل القارة الأمريكية أو ينطلق منها له بعد وجودي بحكم اختلاف معنى "الوجود" في القارة الأمريكية عن معناه في أوروبا. ويستدل كوش لتوضيح ذلك الاختلاف بسمات لغوية ونحوية في اللغة الإسبانية تميزها عن اللغة الإنجليزية، ومنها الفرق بين كلمتي "ser" و "estar"، إذ شكّلت هذه المفاهيم الأساسية -وغيرها- تحدياً كبيراً في إنتاج ترجمة إنجليزية لكتابهِ. وتهدف هذه المقالة إلى دراسة أثر ترجمة هذا النوع من المفاهيم المعقدة على ظهور روابط جديدة بين وجهات النظر العالمية أو الآفاق اللغوية المختلفة، وعلى نشوء أفكار وتقاليد فكرية جديدة. علاوة على ذلك، قد تُعطي ترجمة تلك المفاهيم فرصة للمزيد من التحليل أو التفسير (Gaddis Rose, 1998)، ولذلك تعدّ الترجمة ممارسة مثمرة بذاتها. وتركز المقالة على عدة مفاهيم يصعب ترجمتها من اللغة الإسبانية اللاتينية وصفها كوش بنقاط البداية لاكتشاف الأسس التي تشكل تقليداً فلسفياً في القارة الأمريكية، وتشمل "América" التي قد تترجم خطأً إلى "أمريكا" أو "الأمريكتين"، و "pulcritud" وتعني "نظام" أو "نظافة" في مقابل "hedor" وتعني "النتانة". إن وجود هذه المفاهيم يُظهر التباين الرئيس في قلب الحداثة الأمريكية اللاتينية، وأهمّها تمييز اللغة الإسبانية بين "estar" في مقابل "ser" الذي يبنى عليهما كوش نظرية وجودية معقدة مستوحاة من تفكير شعوب الكيتشوا والأيمارا.

يمكن العثور على ملخص لهذه المقالة هنا <https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.69>

Taño wirrintukun yenielu ti gvy, rakizuam mapu kvpalu ti pu che ka popular en América (1977) ti rakizuamtukelu Rodolfo Kusch, ñi tuwvn argentina, fey kintuykiñe wvtrapvrramal kiñe rakizuam rvkvlvwal ti continente americano mu. tvfachi kusch, taño rakizuam tvfachi américa pikelu pu che yeniey kiñe rakizuamn zungu nielu ti che ka rakizuam niey pu che mvlelu Europa. Feymew ti filosofo feypi mvley kiñe leling tvfachi epu leling kmvvn tvfachi mongenmu ka trvr mvlelunulo ti wirrintukunmu español mvlenulu ti ingles mu. Akulu ti antv ñi epuñpvle genial ti kewvn tvfachi chillka kusch ta ingles mu, feita ka leling, ka kiñe rulpazungu mvley. Tvfachi wirrintukun yeniey rulpazungu ñi kvzaw Kusch kintukey feipial chumgechi rulpazungual ti zungu kiñeke kimfalay ka mvley kake leling linguisticos ka itrofill leling mongen, ka kimvn mvlelu pu intelectuales mu. Pütrükeñma ga rakizuamkey che rulpazuguyem (Gaddis Rose, 1998) femgechi güeniegerpukey kimün, kiñe rakizuam. Feytachi artikulu mew tukulpagey kike ngemül küzawgelu ñi rulpazugueal, Kusch pünhey feytachi nhemül mülelu latinoamericano español mew, zewmayam kiñe filosofía autóctona rulpazugun tripalu Latinoamérica mapu mew. Tukulpaiñ kiñwke nhemül, müley América ("América" (país) reke rulpazugueafuy inglés zugu mew; ka müley pulcritud (Pepi femün nhemül "order" well "cleanliness") Nümün ("stench") mew nüwküley ka püchi kaley feychi nhemül mee pi Kusch, feytachi dicotomía taño ñizo tati latinoamericana modernidad mew, la müley "femgen" ka "mvlen", feytachi zugu rume faliy, günezuamfalüy pi Kuch, feytachi zugu mew nüwküley ñi ontológico teoría, nüwküleu kechua rakizuam mew ka aymara rakizuam mew. Pütrükeñma ga rakizuamkey che rulpazuguyem (Gaddis Rose, 1998) femgechi güeniegerpukey kimün, kiñe rakizuam. Feytachi artikulu mew tukulpagey kike ngemül küzawgelu ñi rulpazugueal, Kusch pünhey feytachi nhemül mülelu latinoamericano español mew, zewmayam kiñe filosofía autóctona rulpazugun tripalu Latinoamérica mapu mew. Tukulpaiñ kiñwke nhemül, müley América ("América" (país) reke rulpazugueafuy inglés zugu mew; ka müley pulcritud (Pepi femün nhemül "order" well "cleanliness") Nümün ("stench") mew nüwküley ka püchi kaley feychi nhemül mee pi Kusch, feytachi dicotomía taño ñizo tati latinoamericana modernidad mew, la müley "femgen" ka "mvlen", feytachi zugu rume faliy, günezuamfalüy pi Kuch, feytachi zugu mew nüwküley ñi ontológico teoría, nüwküleu kechua rakizuam mew ka aymara rakizuam mew.

We would like to thank Luz Marina Huenchucoy Millao (Universidad Católica de Temuco, Chile) for this translation of the article's abstract in Mapudungun.

বাংলা

আর্জেন্টিনীয় দার্শনিক রোডলফো কুশ তাঁর *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977) বইটিতে আমেরিকা মহাদেশের দার্শনিক চিন্তাধারার যে শ্রোতটি পুনরুদ্ধারের চেষ্টা করেছেন, সেটি ইউরোপীয় চিন্তাধারার মূলশ্রোত থেকে প্রসূত। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে থাকা এবং মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের মধ্যে থেকে চিন্তা করা কুশের মতে মার্কিনী অস্তিত্ব যে ইউরোপীয় অস্তিত্বের থেকে ভিন্ন এই বিশেষ তাত্ত্বিক মাত্রা বহন করে। এই তাত্ত্বিক পার্থক্যটি তিনি স্প্যানিশ ভাষার একটি ভাষিক এবং ব্যাকরণগত বৈশিষ্ট্যের সাথে যুক্ত করেছেন যা ইংরেজিতে নেই (*ser* বনাম *estar*)। এটি বৈশিষ্ট্যটি এবং তত্ত্ববিদ্যার অন্যান্য মূল ধারণাগুলি আমার সহ-অনুবাদক, প্রয়াত মারিয়া লুগোনেস, এবং আমার জন্য কিছু সংপ্রস্ন তৈরি করেছিল যখন আমরা কুশের বইয়ের অনুবাদ ইংরেজিতে করতে শুরু করেছিলাম। এই প্রবন্ধটির উদ্দেশ্য একটি নির্দিষ্ট চিন্তাশৈলীর মূল ধারণাগুলির অনুবাদ নতুন বিশ্বদর্শন এবং ভাষাগত দিগন্তকে কী ভাবে একে অপরের সাথে নতুন সম্পর্কে আবদ্ধ করে অভিনব আখ্যায়িকা এবং ঐতিহ্যের জন্ম দেয় তা নিয়ে আলোচনা করা। তা ছাড়াও গ্যাডিস রোজের (১৯৯৮) যুক্তিতে তত্ত্বের (*concepts*) অনুবাদ সেই ধারণাগুলিকে বিশ্লেষণ বা ব্যাখ্যার করার আরও একটি পদ্ধতি হতে পারে এবং নিজ অধিকারেই অনুবাদ এক্ষেত্রে একটি ফলপ্রসূ প্রচেষ্টা। এই প্রবন্ধে অনুবাদের জন্য কঠিন (*difficult-to-translate*) কিছু ধারণার ওপর জোর দেওয়া হয়েছে, মূলতঃ যে ধারণাগুলিকে কুশ ল্যাটিন আমেরিকান স্প্যানিশ ভাষা দিয়ে দেশজ আমেরিকান দার্শনিক ঐতিহ্যের প্রকৃতি বিশ্লেষণের জন্য ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন। যে ধারণাগুলি এই আলোচনার জন্য বেছে নেওয়া হয়েছে তা হোল আমেরিকা (অনুবাদের ক্ষেত্রে যা আমেরিকা মহাদেশ বা মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র হিসাবে বিভ্রান্তি সৃষ্টি করতে পারে); ল্যাটিন আমেরিকান আধুনিকতার দুই বিপরীত মেরু *pulcritud* (শৃঙ্খলা বা পরিচ্ছন্নতা) এবং *hedor* (দূর্গন্ধ); এবং, সর্বোপরি, স্প্যানিশ ভাষায় *estar* এবং *ser* মধ্যে পার্থক্য। এই পার্থক্য এবং কেচুয়া ও আইমারা চিন্তাভাবনার ওপর ভিত্তি করে কুশ তাঁর জটিল সত্ত্বাতাত্ত্বিক মতবাদ প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন।

প্রবন্ধটির সারসংক্ষেপ এখানে <https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.720> পাওয়া যাবে।

Español

En su libro *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977), el filósofo argentino Rodolfo Kusch se propuso recuperar una forma de pensamiento que consideraba arraigada en el continente americano. Para Kusch, pensar en y desde América tiene una dimensión ontológica: el ser en América es diferente del ser en Europa; a partir de allí, el filósofo establece un vínculo entre esta distinción ontológica y una diferencia lingüística y gramatical del español que no existe en inglés: *ser* vs. *estar*. A la hora de traducir el libro de Kusch al inglés, esta diferencia, entre otros elementos y conceptos, representa un obstáculo o desafío de traducción. Este artículo aborda la traducción de la obra de Kusch buscando poner de relieve el hecho de que la traducción de conceptos, más allá de su dificultad, genera también nuevas relaciones entre distintos horizontes lingüísticos y cosmovisiones diversas, nuevas narrativas, e incluso tradiciones intelectuales. De hecho, la traducción de conceptos puede ser una manera de analizar e interpretar dichos conceptos (Gaddis Rose, 1998), por lo que supone un ejercicio productivo en sí mismo. En el artículo se comenta la traducción de varios conceptos específicos difíciles de traducir y que, siendo propios del español latinoamericano, Kusch utiliza como punto de partida para elaborar su trabajo sobre una tradición filosófica autóctona latinoamericana. Entre estos conceptos se encuentran *América* (que puede ser traducida al inglés de manera errónea como “America”; también *pulcritud* (equivalente posible de “order” o “cleanliness”) y que Kusch contrasta con *hedor* (“stench”) para formar una dicotomía que según él constituiría la matriz de la modernidad latinoamericana; y finalmente, *ser* y *estar*, relación muy importante para Kusch y en la cual el filósofo basa su compleja teoría ontológica a partir del pensamiento quechua y aimara.

Una sinopsis de este artículo se puede encontrar [aquí](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.572) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.572>).

فارسی

پروفسور رُدولفو کُوش در کتاب (1977) خود، *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América*، قصد دارد شکلی از تفکر را احیا کند که به عقیده او در ریشه‌های قاره آمریکا نهفته است. به نظر او، اندیشیدن در بستر قاره آمریکا و از منظر آن، جنبه‌ای هستی‌شناختی دارد: بودن در قاره آمریکا با بودن در اروپا متفاوت است، و کوش این تفاوت هستی‌شناختی را به تمایزی زبان‌شناختی و دستوری در زبان اسپانیایی آمریکای لاتین پیوند می‌زند؛ تمایزی که در زبان انگلیسی وجود ندارد (*ser* vs. *estar*). این مفاهیم اصلی و موارد دیگری از این‌دست موجب شده است که ترجمه کتاب او به زبان انگلیسی کار دشواری باشد. هدف آن است که ببینیم چطور ترجمه مفاهیم جدل‌برانگیزی از این نوع، می‌تواند روابط جدیدی میان جهان‌بینی‌ها و افق‌های زبانی ایجاد کند و موجب ظهور روایت‌ها و سنت‌های فکری جدید شود. علاوه بر این، ترجمه کردن این مفاهیم می‌تواند روشی برای تحلیل یا تفسیر آنها باشد (Gaddis Rose, 1998) و به همین دلیل، فی‌نفسه سازنده است. این مقاله بر چند مفهوم تمرکز دارد که ترجمه‌شان دشوار است و کوش از این مفاهیم در زبان اسپانیایی آمریکای لاتین، به‌منزله نقاط ورود خود برای کشف مبانی سنت فلسفی بومزاد آمریکایی بهره می‌گیرد. این مفاهیم شامل دوگانه‌های زیر است: *امریکا* (*América*) که ممکن است به اشتباه به آمریکا (*America*) ترجمه شود؛ *pulcritud* (آراستگی، تمیزی) در مقابل *hedor* (متعفن، بوی گند) - دوگانه‌ای مفهومی در دل مدرنیته آمریکای لاتین؛ و مهم‌تر از همه، تمایز بین *ser* و *estar* در زبان اسپانیایی که کوش، با الهام از تفکر کیچوا و ایمارا، نظریه هستی‌شناختی پیچیده‌ای را بر پایه آن مطرح می‌کند. خلاصه این مقاله را می‌توانید در اینجا (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.699>) پیدا کنید.

Português

Na obra *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977), o filósofo Rodolfo Kusch busca resgatar uma forma de pensamento que, segundo ele, está na origem do continente americano. Pensar nas Américas, e a partir delas, tem para ele uma dimensão ontológica: ser/estar nas Américas é diferente de ser/estar na Europa, e Kusch faz uma conexão entre essa distinção ontológica e uma distinção linguístico-gramatical no espanhol latino-americano que não tem correspondência em inglês (*ser* vs. *estar*). Estes e outros conceitos-chave constituíram um desafio para a produção de uma tradução do seu livro para a língua inglesa. O objetivo deste artigo é considerar como a tradução de conceitos desafiadores dessa natureza pode fazer com que visões de mundo e horizontes linguísticos se conectem entre si em novas relações, engendrando narrativas e tradições intelectuais inovadoras. Além disso, a tradução de conceitos pode ser um meio de análise e interpretação desses mesmos conceitos (Gaddis Rose, 1998), sendo, assim, um exercício produtivo em si mesmo. O artigo volta-se, primordialmente, para vários conceitos difíceis de traduzir que Kusch identifica no espanhol latino-americano como os seus pontos de entrada que conduzem a um desvelar dos fundamentos de uma tradição filosófica autóctone *américana*. Esses conceitos incluem *América* (que poderia ser, de forma equivocada, traduzido como “America”); *pulcritud* (ordem ou limpeza) em contraste com *hedor* (fedor) como uma forma binária no coração da modernidade latino-americana; e, acima de tudo, a distinção, em espanhol, entre ser e estar, com base na qual Kusch desenvolve uma complexa teoria ontológica informada pelo pensamento quéchua e aimará.

A sinopse deste artigo pode ser acessada [aqui](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.587) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.587>).

Kichwa

El pensamiento indígena y popular en América (1977) sutichasqa p'anqanpi, amawt'a argentino Rodolfo Kusch continente americanopi runa t'ukurisqanmanjina umancharikuna tiyan, nispá nirqa. Tata Kuschpaq Americapipis Americamantapachapis runaq t'ukuriyninqa uk dimensión ontológica nisqayuq: Americapi kay rimariyqa Europamanta kay rimariyqa wakjina; chaymanta, payqa chay distinción ontológica nisqata khuskachan, chantapis español simiq lingüísticanpi gramaticanpi kasqanta mana inglés simipi kasqanwan qhawarin: inglespiqa kay (ser) /kasay (estar) uklla. Kay rimariykunapis wak rimariykunapis Kushpata p'anqanta españolmanta inglesman tikrasaspaqa, ancha sasa karqa. Kunanqa, kay llank'ayniy Kuschpaq p'anqaynin inglesman amawt'a wañusqa mama María Lugoneswan tikrasqaykumanta qhawarichin. Kay llank'ayniypiqa askha sasa rimariykunay tikrayninmanta qhawarichini. Chayta ruwaspaqa musuq relaciones nisqa cosmovisiones lingüísticaspura khuskachayta atikun. Musuq narrativas yurichiytapis ruwayta atikullantaq, intelectualespata llank'ayninkutapis tikrayta. Mama Gaddis Rosepaq (1998) rimariykunata tikrayqa kanman: rimariykuna kasqankuta qhawariy jinallataq niyta munasqankuta. Jinaspataq, rimariykunata tikrayqa amañayman apawanchis, chayta ruwayqa sumaqa, ininapapapis sumaqpunimin. Kay llank'ayniypiqa askha sasa rimaykunay tiqrayninmanta qhawarichini. Kay rimariykuna español latinoamericano simimantapuni kasqankuraykutaq, chaykunawanpuni uk tradición filosófica autóctona latinoamericana nisqamanta llank'ayninta ruwananpaq p'anqayninpi tata Kusch apaykachan. Kay laya rimariykunamantaqa kaykuna kasanku: *América* inglesman tikrayqa "America" pantasqacha kanman, jinallataq *llimphu* inglés simipi "k'uchunchasqa" manaqa "pichasqa". Kaytataq tata Kusch asna rimariywan kikinchan, dicotomía nisqata wakichinapaq. Kaytaq paypaq modernidad latinoamericaqpata matriznin kanman. Kuschpaq kay / kasay rimariykunata khuskachayqa anchayupapuni. Chaykuna patapitaq sasa teoría ontologicanta llank'arin. Chaytaq qhiswa runaq aymara runaq t'ukuriyninkumantapacha qhawarisqa kasan.

We would like to thank Denise Laredo Antezana (Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (Bolivia) and Qjinti Barrios van der Valk (York University, Canada) for this translation of the article's short abstract in Quechua.

Türkçe

El pensamiento indígena y popular en América adlı eserinde filozof Rodolfo Kusch, Amerika kıtasının kökeninde yattığına inandığı bir düşünce biçimini hayata döndürmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ona göre Amerika'da ya da Amerika'ya özgü düşünmenin ontolojik bir boyutu vardır: Amerika kıtasında olmak Avrupa kıtasında olmaktan farklıdır. Kusch, bu ontolojik ayrımı İngilizcede olmayıp Latin Amerika İspanyolcasında bulunan dilbilimsel ve dilbilgisel bir ayrım ile ilişkilendirmektedir (*ser* ve *estar*). Bu ve benzeri anahtar kavramlar kitabın İngilizce çevirisinde zorluklar oluşturmaktadır. Bu makale, bu tür zorlu kavramların çevirisinin dünya görüşü ve dilbilgisel ufukları yeni ilişkilerle nasıl buluşturabileceğini ve alışılmışın dışında anlatılar ve gelenekler meydana getirebileceğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, söz konusu kavramları çevirmek aynı zamanda bu kavramları analiz etme ve yorumlamanın da bir yolu olabilir (Gaddis Rose, 1998). Bu sebeple çeviri kendi başına bir üretim eylemidir. Bu makale çevrilmesi zor olan birkaç kavrama odaklanmaktadır. Kusch, Latin Amerika İspanyolcasındaki bu kavramları, kadim *Américan* felsefe geleneğinin temelini ortaya çıkarmak için başlangıç noktası olarak görmektedir. Bu kavramlar *América* (yanlışlıkla Amerika olarak çevrilmeye yatkındır), Latin Amerika modernliğinin merkezindeki bir ikilik olarak *hedor*'a (kötü koku) zıt *pulcritud* (düzen ya da temizlik) ve en önemlisi de Kusch'un Quechua ve Aymara felsefesine dayandırdığı karmaşık ontolojik bir kavram olan İspanyolcadaki *estar* ve *ser* arasındaki ayrımı içermektedir.

Bu makalenin genişletilmiş özetine [buradan](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounter-s-in-translation.616) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounter-s-in-translation.616>) ulaşabilirsiniz.

中文

在《*El pensamiento indígena y popular en América*》(1977)中，阿根廷哲学家鲁道夫·库什(Rodolfo Kusch)致力于恢复一种思考形式，他相信这种思考形式根植于美洲大陆。对他来说，在美洲，从美洲的角度思考，意味着一种本体论的维度：生存于美洲不同于生存于欧洲(*being in the Americas is different from being in Europe*)，库什将这种本体论差异与拉丁美洲西班牙语中语言和语法区别联系起来，而这种区别在英语中并不存在(*ser* vs. *estar*)。当我们着手翻译库什的书时，这些和其他关键概念对我的合作译者，已故的玛丽亚·卢戈内斯(Maria Lugones)和我自己提出了挑战。本文旨在思考翻译这种具有挑战性的概念是如何将世界观和语言视野带入彼此之间的新的关系中，并产生新的知识叙事和传统。此外，翻译概念可以成为分析或解释这些概念的一种方式(Gaddis Rose, 1998)，因此翻译本身就是一项富有成效的实践。本文重点讨论几个难以翻译的概念，这些概念被库什在拉美西班牙语中确定为他的切入点，用以揭示本土*Américan*哲学传统的基础。这些概念包括 *América* (可能被误导性地翻译为“America”)；*pulcritud* (order or cleanliness) 与 *hedor* (stench) 的对比作为拉丁美洲现代性核心的二元对立关系；最重要的是，西班牙语中 *estar* 和 *ser* 的区别，在此基础上，库什建立起了一套基于克丘亚语和艾马拉语思维的复杂的本体论理论

本文的概要可以在这里查阅 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.576>)

INDEX

Keywords

Rodolfo Kusch, Latin American philosophy, translation, epistemic injustice, ontology, colonialism

Mots-clés

Rodolfo Kusch, philosophie latino-américaine, traduction, injustice épistémique, ontologie, colonialisme

الكلمات المفتاحية

رودولفو كوش, الفلسفة الأمريكية اللاتينية, الظلم المعرفي, الترجمة, علم الوجود, الاستعمار

কীওয়ার্ড

রোডলফো কুশ, লাতিন আমেরিকান দর্শন, অনুবাদ, জ্ঞানতাত্ত্বিক অবিচার, তত্ত্ববিদ্যা, উপনিবেশবাদ

Palabras claves

Rodolfo Kusch, filosofía latinoamericana, traducción, injusticia epistémica, ontología, colonialismo

کلمات کلیدی

رودولفو کوش, فلسفہ آمریکای لاتین, بی عدالتی معرفتی, ترجمہ, هستی شناسی, استعمار

Palavras chaves

Rodolfo Kusch, Filosofia Latino-Americana, tradução, injustiça epistêmica, ontologia, colonialismo

Inininapaq rimariykuna

Rodolfo Kusch, filosofía latinoamericana, tikray, mana kasqanmanjina yachaykuna, ontología, colonialismo

Anahtar kelimeler

Rodolfo Kusch, Latin Amerikan felsefesi, çeviri, bilgisel adaletsizlik, ontoloji, sömürgecilik

关键词

鲁道夫·库什 (Rodolfo Kusch), 拉丁美洲哲学, 翻译, 认知正义, 本体论, 殖民主义

AUTHOR

Joshua M. Price

Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada

Translation and the climate crisis: Attending to the local in a global emergency

الترجمة وأزمة المناخ: مُراعاة العوامل المحليّة في حالات الطوارئ العالميّة

অনুবাদ ও জলবায়ু সংকট: স্থানীয় উপস্থিতি ও সার্বভৌম জরুরি পরিস্থিতি

La traducción y la crisis climática: Atendiendo lo local en una emergencia global

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OUTLINE

Translation as ‘bridge-building’: Knowledge translation

Translation as alchemy: Turning information into action

Translation as antidote: Interlingual translation

Implications

TEXT

I would like to thank participants in the Translational and Narrative Epistemologies workshop organized by the *Bodies in Translation Research Project* (<http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/projects/bodies-in-translation-science-knowledge-and-sustai/index.html>) (University of Oslo) in collaboration with the Genealogies of Knowledge Research Network, which took place in September 2023. I also thank staff and students at the Centre for Translation and Cultural Studies, Dublin City University, the School of Translation and Interpretation, University of Ottawa, and the Cultural Identity and Memory Studies Institute, University of St Andrews for their feedback on presentations based on this contribution. And finally, my thanks go to the referees and the editors of this volume for their meticulous comments and editing.

- 1 As one of the most global of conversations in history, climate crisis¹ discourse is intrinsically dependent on and intertwined with translation. I begin with an overview of this relationship, before shedding

some light on the workings of climate crisis discourse through the lens of translation. My main argument, which I elaborate in some detail in the following sections, is that a renewed focus on interlingual translation—as well as on linguistic and cultural specificities based on locality²—may provide important insights into some of the issues currently faced by climate scientists attempting to address the global climate crisis.

- 2 Translation is used in three distinct but interrelated ways in the discourse on climate emergency. The first is reflected in the widely used term knowledge translation, often abbreviated as KT in the literature and mostly referring to the dissemination of research findings on the climate crisis to stakeholders, including the general population. The second, closely related usage follows on from the first and is more metaphorical in nature: here, translating connotes converting the global/scientific information derived from research findings into local/effective action rather than simply disseminating it. When translation is evoked in climate crisis discourse, it usually covers these two interrelated meanings. The third sense of translation in climate crisis discourse is the familiar but less acknowledged meaning of interlingual translation and interpreting. These practices play a crucial role in the circulation of climate crisis information and responses aimed at addressing the crisis, but they remain taken for granted and unproblematized.
- 3 Anthropologist Rudiak-Gould (2012) sums up the role of translation in the context of his work on climate crisis discourse in the Marshall Islands as follows:

Climate change communication is ultimately an issue of translation: the cultural translation from scholarly communities to citizens; the cultural translation from Western and other elite developers of climate science to indigenous people and other non-Westerners; the linguistic translation from specialized climatological jargon to the colloquial language of citizens; and the linguistic translation from English, and other languages in which the notion of anthropogenic global warming has been formulated and studied, to the languages of those who are called upon to prevent or prepare for it. (p. 46)

- 4 While Rudiak-Gould (2012) recognizes the significance of translation in the opposite direction too, when “citizens’ visions of climate

change are transmitted to the scientific, academic, and political elite” (p. 46), it is telling of the prevalent dynamics in the field that this directionality is not always foregrounded or taken into consideration.

- 5 Despite this intertwining of climate crisis discourse and various forms of translation, apart from a few notable publications (such as Cronin, 2017, 2020b; Caimotto and Raus, 2022, pp. 124–145; Todorova, 2022) translation studies has been relatively silent on the climate emergency and the ways in which the discipline might contribute to the debate. In what follows, I aim to encourage synergies between translation studies and the climate sciences, and offer some pointers for future avenues of (preferably joint) exploration. I begin by outlining the use of knowledge translation in climate crisis discourse in some detail, followed by a brief discussion of translation as the desired conversion of information into action. These two sections will elucidate some of the problems faced by climate scientists and policy makers today. In the final part of the contribution, I will discuss linguistic/cultural aspects of the climate crisis and present interlingual translation as one possible area to focus on in order to enhance the impact of climate crisis discourse.

Translation as ‘bridge-building’: Knowledge translation

- 6 Knowledge translation is a term that originates in the medical sciences, and is defined by the World Health Organization as “the synthesis, exchange and application of knowledge by relevant stakeholders to accelerate the benefits of global and local innovation in strengthening health systems and improving people’s health” (WHO, 2021). Knowledge translation is used in medicine to describe the combined efforts of many agents “translating knowledge from ‘bench to bedside’, or from basic research into clinical practice” (Ødemark et al., 2021, p. 153). In climate crisis discourse, the use of the term is sporadic and less regulated than in medicine,³ but the assumed flow of translation is similarly unidirectional. The emphasis is placed on “translating climate change effects into everyday language” (DeWeber & Wagner, 2015, p. 395) in order to facilitate climate science communication. Information and findings by climate scientists are expected to be disseminated to a wide range of users, with varying levels of

background in or understanding of climate science; these users include politicians, company CEOs, NGOs, local and central governments, international organizations, emergency workers, farmers, teachers, foresters, and lay people. It is recognized that this diversity of end users requires meticulous audience design that is appropriate for each occasion and outlet. And yet, such design is rarely sought or achieved. The general approach to knowledge translation does not seek a dialogue with relevant stakeholders but communication to them. It is not uncommon, therefore, for knowledge translation to be used interchangeably and indiscriminately with knowledge dissemination, knowledge mobilization and knowledge transfer, as in Abdulai et al. (2021, p. 108) and Reddix (2021), indicating the urgency and desire to pass on—in a one-way fashion—standard information assumed to be capable of mobilizing communities in their climate-induced struggles. This, as widely documented, is a common feature of scientific communication:

Generally natural scientists—also those who are concerned with producing ‘usable knowledge’—tend to talk to society and to decisionmakers rather than to talk *with* them. As modern science becomes more specialized and more removed from tacit knowledge the distance between scientists and ordinary people also increases. As is the case with climate change, scientists are actually the ‘problem owners’ in the sense that without the scientist as the link and door-opener between nature and society, climate change would not have been ‘visible’ to society. (Naustdalslid, 2011, p. 250)

- 7 The concept of knowledge translation in climate crisis discourse foregrounds the need to bridge the gap between science and political practice (at both individual and governmental levels) through a restricted understanding of meaning transfer. In their concern to get the message across, climate scientists place much emphasis on communicating knowledge about the climate crisis in a way that enhances its relevance and sense of urgency for their audiences. For example, rather than talking about changes in the suitability of a certain habitat for key species of flora and fauna, scientists have argued that it might be better to talk about the socio-economic implications of such changes, framing this strategy of adapting the message to specific audiences as translation:

The responses of fish and other species to climate change can be translated into everyday language that will facilitate climate science communication. Although such translations are rare, one example of this type of creativity is the translation from changes in habitat suitability for tree species to potential reductions in maple syrup production [...], which is arguably more interesting and understandable for the general public. Similar translations could be especially important for communicating climate change effects on game fish and other species that are socially and economically important to large groups of people. (DeWeber & Wagner, 2015, p. 396)

- 8 Translating climate emergency research into concrete information that has immediate relevance to different sectors of society is seen as crucial for achieving action. The idea is that the information needs to be tailored to the needs, habits, expectations, and everyday lives of people so that it can finally be heard and understood. Unfortunately, such translations only work to the extent that for each instance of climate crisis effect on a given species and ecosystem, affected human users and “a relevant, everyday currency” (DeWeber & Wagner, 2015, p. 398) can be identified. If none are readily available, altruistic relations with the earth rarely emerge, as the environment and climate are, generally-speaking, still seen as too broad and remote an issue to be taken seriously in mainstream political and media discourse. I return to this issue and elaborate on it further in the third section below.
- 9 Despite the traditional emphasis on the need to achieve such knowledge transfer, scientists and policy makers are increasingly recognizing that they also have to listen to and learn from the diverse experiences of local communities. Global actions that need to be taken in order to slow down, stop or reverse global warming, which is contributing to the climate crisis, are expected to be uniform across the world, for example in terms of ending fossil fuel dependency, eliminating meat and dairy from diets, and switching to alternative, public means of transport. Yet, the climate crisis itself inevitably means different things in different locations. Locality is key in the experience of the climate crisis—whether it be floods, droughts, wild-fires, heatwaves, or ice storms—as well as in the measures that need to be taken to address it. The same set of global ecological data

means different things in different regions, i.e., they need to be *interpreted* differently according to geological and sociological variants. Translation of scientific information therefore needs to take into account the specificities of the target audience in terms of time and place, as is increasingly acknowledged in the literature:

Translating physical changes into human impacts is not a simple task; communities are not passive players that will respond to changes in the physical environment in easily predictable ways. While many prognoses about change are made on a large scale, human activity is highly localized, and impacts and responses will be conditioned by local geography and a range of endogenous factors, including demographic trends, economic complexity, and experience with 'change' in a broad sense. (Duerden, 2004, p. 204)

- 10 Social scientist Jon Naustdalslid (2011) draws a distinction between “traditional environmental problems” which are immediately visible and quantifiable, with clear and direct impact on local communities (for example, air pollution), and the contemporary climate crisis, which may remain abstract, deferred, and difficult to estimate or measure—for example, the exact extent of the rise of sea level in the near future (pp. 244–247). The former “can more easily mobilize local support” and “link up to and support policy action” (Naustdalslid, 2011, p. 247) because they are more tangible in the areas directly affected and hence easier to recognize as relevant. Short-term positive results can also be achieved and observed more easily. Naustdalslid (2011) further draws a distinction between knowledge translation in climate adaptation and climate mitigation strategies and argues that

it may be easier to translate into practical action knowledge about adaptation than knowledge about mitigation [...]. Knowledge about how climate change may strike a concrete local community is more similar to traditional environmental problems than knowledge about how one household's use of energy is part of and should be acted upon as a global environmental problem. (p. 247)

- 11 This means that intelligibility of information is considered more important for knowledge translation in adaptation than that in mitigation. Knowledge translation in mitigation efforts generally targets

agents with power, such as governments, institutions and companies, while the main audience for knowledge translation in adaptation is affected communities and populations. Target audience design is equally important in each case but may become even more complex and urgent when the aim is to enable communities to adapt successfully to climate change (Reddix, 2021, p. 5). The concept of resilience is often cited in relation to locality and knowledge translation (Morecroft et al., 2012; Reddix, 2021, p. 5; Tchoukaleyska et al., 2021, p. 7), emphasizing the role of knowledge translation in creating communities that can cope with increasingly adverse environmental conditions. But a focus on resilience, vulnerability and adaptation has been criticized on the basis that it can downplay the hegemonic and political dimensions of the climate crisis (de Wit & Haines, 2021, p. 6).

12 This rising awareness in climate crisis discourse of the necessity to go beyond the traditional understanding of knowledge translation as knowledge transfer/dissemination is in line with shifting perspectives on scientific communication in general. In her work on the translation of science, Maeve Olohan (2018) observes that in contemporary science studies, science itself is now less commonly regarded “as a set of knowledge claims and the pursuit of universal truths” (p. 503); instead, there is more interest in the situatedness of knowledge and the variety of contexts in which it might be practised. Culture, moreover, is no longer considered “disinterested, value-free, objective, unified, universalist and realist”, but is increasingly deployed in a more nuanced way as a key concept in science communication (Olohan, 2018, p. 503). Olohan (2018) further argues that the idea and associated terminology of scientific facts being ‘communicated’ or ‘disseminated’ to the public “reflects a prevailing positivist view and an outmoded model of communication” (p. 506). In climate crisis discourse, as in other areas of scientific communication, it is not helpful to place the scientists “in the privileged and paternalistic position of being the experts who judge whether scientific ideas have been accurately conveyed or understood” (Olohan, 2018, p. 506). The circulation and reception of scientific knowledge will always be based on the non-scientists’ ideas of science, their prior knowledge and beliefs, and the prevalent public narratives⁴ of the time.

13 This shift in understanding the production and reception of scientific knowledge is increasingly reflected in climate crisis discourse. Today

there seems to be more scope for a dialogical process of knowledge exchange between the originators, disseminators and users of climate crisis related knowledge, and a recognition that audience reception will determine the effectiveness of the communication of this knowledge. Recent conceptualizations of knowledge translation in climate crisis discourse thus increasingly place the emphasis on multidirectional communication. The aim is to move away from “closed knowledge systems”—that is, research networks where knowledge and findings are shared internally, and disseminated through one-way communication with stakeholders—and toward a richer, change-inducing dialogue between diverse partners and stakeholders” (Tchoukaleyska et al., 2021, p. 7). It is understood that multi-way communication and the exchange of information enable diverse communities and organizations to participate more actively in decision making and that research achieves more impact when it actively involves members of the community in conceptualizing and conducting research projects, in translating their findings and sharing them with stakeholders, and “when adaptation is considered ‘*through the lens of place*’” (Tchoukaleyska et al., 2021, p. 7; emphasis added).

- 14 Needless to say, such collaborative work needs to be sensitive to the community’s experiences of the climate crisis. This is the point at which climate crisis discourse collides with cultural discourses. Climate science, as generally understood and practiced today, cannot continue to denote a universal and purportedly non-cultural practice that defines the social and cultural as a barrier to the transmission of ‘true and valid knowledge’. It has to treat culture in a similar way to mainstream translation studies: as a key feature of the social world that we work with and learn from, both in places where scientific knowledge is produced and in the wider domains in which it is received, applied, contested, and transformed. The operative function of texts focusing on the climate crisis is of paramount importance, perhaps even more so than their informative function, as the ultimate goal is effecting change in behavior. Hence the need for a genuine dialogue with diverse audiences.
- 15 In a noteworthy example of one initiative that reflects this shift towards a more nuanced approach to culture, Abdulai et al. (2021) report on their work using community radio for place-based know-

ledge mobilization on climate crisis initiatives in Labrador and Newfoundland, Canada. They maintain that “people have [an] inclination to engage with climate issues when *place attachment* is incorporated into messaging” (Abdulai et al., 2021, p. 114; emphasis added). Their solution is to ‘localize’ dialogues aired on their community radio, “particularly in translating and advocating for local-based climate solutions and action” (Abdulai et al., 2021, p. 115). Various strategies are employed in these localized radio programmes, including the use of local languages, as well as “translat[ing] knowledge to formats relatable to the local people, including using radio drama, short radio programs, talk shows, and call-in programs” (Abdulai et al., 2021, pp. 111–112). Such place-based programmes provide the space “to incorporate and reconcile local experiential climate knowledge with scientific research that has the potential to produce community-tailored actions” (Abdulai et al., 2021, p. 115). This process also opens up the possibility of sharing and recording personal narratives of the climate crisis, for instance in connection with coastal erosion and deforestation, creating a much-needed dialogue between scientific information and situated knowledges. Abdulai et al.’s community radio project drew on existing traditions of storytelling to maximize the dissemination of relevant information and enhance public engagement. Here, personal narratives act as the glue that binds and shapes the desired public narrative around localized climate discourse, a public narrative that is informed by the meta-narrative of climate crisis science. Radio programmes are thus able to translate complex information about the climate crisis and render it interpretable and relevant to the experiences of community members within their own context. In such endeavours, the persistent metaphor of translation as a bridge building exercise is clearly at play: community radio stations fulfil the role of translators who are able to “bridge the gaps between communities, scientists, and policy makers” (Abdulai et al., 2021, p. 112).

Translation as alchemy: Turning information into action

- 16 The second, more metaphorical use of translation in climate crisis discourse closely follows from the anxieties around knowledge trans-

lation discussed in the previous section. It mainly revolves around the idea of converting abstract information obtained through knowledge translation into tangible and viable action, but translation in this sense is also used to mean turning theory (or plans, evidence, laws, feelings) into practices, projects, and behavioural change. Here, instead of a bridge between knowledge producers and knowledge users, translation emerges as alchemy, a process of turning the abstract, analytical, and scientific into the concrete, practical, and socio-political, thus expediting the desired change. Depending on the viewpoint of the narrator, this type of translation is understood as the task of governments, politicians, policy makers, scientists, or lay people. In other words, the translator is designated as someone other than the narrator, their exact identification perpetually deferred. There is widespread agreement among researchers and activists that this type of translation faces many challenges, ranging from short-sighted governmental policies to individual apathy. In the words of Naustdalslid (2011) “the problem is not knowledge or lack of knowledge”, as climate-related information and knowledge are almost always available. Instead, what proves to be problematic is often “the context for using knowledge and the incentives to actually turn knowledge into action” (p. 249). Such metaphorical use of translation is particularly widespread in scholarly articles in the field of climate science, as in the following direct quotes:

- “the difficulty of translating expected environmental changes directly into local impacts” (Duerden, 2004, p. 206);
- “translating a strategic commitment to ‘increasing resilience’ into effective, on-the-ground action” (Morecroft et al., 2012, p. 547);
- “translating [the] interdependencies” among UN’s 17 core Sustainable Development Goals into “advice for coherent policy making”; “translating [...] findings into concrete policy advice”; “scientific research on [...] interdependencies [...] to be translated into policy-making” (Breuer et al., 2019, pp. 2, 8, 13);
- “translating climate beliefs into climate action”; “moral behavioral sentiments act as translators, mediating the relation between general climate beliefs and concrete climate actions” (Zawadzki et al., 2020, pp. 21, 39);
- “translating climate strategies into action”; “translation of analytical work into investments”; “translation of analytical work into practice”; “translation of action plans into companion projects”; “whether technical

and advisory work is being translated into practice” (Bazbauers, 2022, pp. 1-3, 6).

- 17 The use of translation in this sense is equally common in news media reporting on the climate crisis, as is evident in a small sample from *The Guardian*:⁵

- “More than 1,100 EU environmental safeguards will need translating into UK law.” (Simms, 2017)
- “Passing the [U.K. Environment] Act is momentous but will count for nothing if it’s not seized upon with vigour by government and translated into real action on the ground.” (Laville, 2021)
- “Citizens are undeniably concerned by the state of the planet, but these findings raise doubts regarding their level of commitment to preserving it [...]. Rather than translating into a greater willingness to change their habits, citizens’ concerns are particularly focused on their negative assessment of governments’ efforts.” (Henley, 2021)
- “We must now translate fine words into still finer actions.” (Walker, 2021)
- “Scientists, politicians, and policymakers need to work more tightly together to translate air pollution evidence into air pollution action.” (Fuller, 2022)
- “Issuing new guidances will not translate immediately into green practices [...].” (Vidal, 2022)

- 18 The perceived disjuncture that needs to be transversed—between scientific information and its tangible impact, between cutting-edge research and its widespread application in law, government policies and individual lifestyle choices—has its roots in another perceived chasm: that between nature and society. Naustdalslid (2011) argues that research published in the period before 2010 focused on climate change as yet another environmental issue, ‘out there’ in nature, similar to what he calls the “traditional environmental problems” as discussed above, with impacts on local communities. It is this dualistic perspective on environment that reinforces the need for knowledge translation, as discussed in the previous section, and underpins a view of translation as an alchemical process, as evident in the examples from both scholarly literature and the media above. If nature and society are seen as two different entities, the role of the natural sciences becomes one of “translat[ing] the facts about nature to society” and the scientific expert can be cast as “some sort of interpreter on behalf of nature” (Naustdalslid, 2011, p. 245), tasked

with demonstrating the extent of damage inflicted on nature by society and minimizing this damage by offering scientific solutions. Critiquing this approach to the climate crisis, Naustdalslid (2011) rightly argues that “nature and society should be seen not only as interdependent, but also as two interlinked systems where the boundaries between them are becoming blurred” (p. 246).

- 19 In what follows, I attempt to demonstrate how a renewed focus on locality and the kind of awareness of linguistic and cultural differences that can be brought into sharper relief by interlingual translation may contribute to blurring the boundaries between nature and society further, and thus address some of the weaknesses of the two approaches to translation discussed so far.

Translation as antidote: Interlingual translation

- 20 Interlingual translation undoubtedly plays a critical role in both the formation and the spread of climate crisis discourse. There are myriad pressing issues in this field, the majority of which are currently under-researched. Translated information about the climate emergency travels through a variety of genres: first-hand accounts of climate crisis impacts; research papers; policy and legal documents; news media reports; scholarly and popular monographs (fiction and non-fiction); websites; audio-visual material (e.g. documentaries on the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, exposure of the adverse practices of certain industries); and international climate summits and regional events in which oral interpreting usually takes place. Translating and interpreting this material is crucial, since climate action emphasizes inclusivity and the global circulation of information. There is particular emphasis on the way Indigenous communities around the world are experiencing the climate emergency, and on how they can contribute to the debate. However, with little or no interpreting provision, international delegates in climate summits often find the debates difficult to make sense of and contribute to, given that they have to follow complex legal and scientific discussions in their third or fourth languages (Vidal, 2010). Even when translation and interpreting are offered (for instance, through online volunteer platforms), there may not be sufficient

awareness of language politics and hegemonies on the part of those providing the translations. Such platforms may therefore end up perpetuating the epistemic injustices already ingrained in a predominantly Anglophone climate crisis discourse (Baker, 2024). Research reports on biodiversity published in languages other than English do not find the international readership they deserve, thus increasing the gap between Global South and Global North conservation efforts (Quaglia, 2022). Climate crisis discourse further differs across countries and regions, “with media and political platforms framing [the crisis] differently to support certain narratives” (“How are translation and ecolinguistics...”, undated). This creates tension in terms of the diverse ways in which translated material is incorporated into local narrative frameworks, which source material is picked up and which is ignored, as well as how the selected material is framed and translated.

- 21 A less frequently discussed area of research is the interlingual translation of literature on the climate emergency for children and teens, where the translation direction is mostly from English into other languages. In recent years, there has been growing discussion on eco-anxiety, especially its effects on the younger population as the generation that is expected to bear the brunt of the climate crisis. While it is not uncommon to see the climate crisis in general approached as “a global public health problem” (Reddix, 2021, p. 5), the focus on the connections between mental health and ecological decline further medicalizes an issue that is inherently social and political. Books on the climate and ecological crises for children and teens mainly aim to channel this eco-anxiety into action, trying to transform the widespread narrative of doom and gloom into one of hope. A quick glance at the paratextual material of relevant works demonstrates that the prevalent strategy is to counter-balance eco-anxiety and the inertia it creates by translating these negative feelings into positive action: “Check out this book, and let’s get to work”, *The Tantrum that Saved the World* (Herbert & Mann, 2022); “An enchanted adventure with a message of empowerment and hope”, *The Last Wild* (Torday, 2013); “Brief yet inspirational, this story will galvanize youth to use their voices for change”, *Taking on the Plastics Crisis* (Testa & Lukashevsky, 2020); “Manages to balance

urgency and hope”, *I have the Right to Save my Planet* (Serres et al., 2021).

- 22 These are all extremely rich areas of research that deserve in-depth study by scholars of translation as well as climate scientists. But rather than pursue them further, I want to return to knowledge translation, the (mostly failing) alchemy of translating scientific information into action, and the perceived gap between nature and society which seems to haunt climate crisis communication and create the illusion that the problems are ‘out there’ and can effectively be solved through scientific and technological advances and policy changes. My argument is that recognizing the significance of local cultural perspectives, considering the ways in which such perspectives are reflected in and shaped by language, and reflecting on the ramifications of interlingual translation (or translation proper) of concepts in climate crisis discourse may challenge mainstream expectations of knowledge translation in the field and may inspire climate scientists to identify other, more effective ways of turning their findings into action.
- 23 In their introduction to a volume that questions deep-seated assumptions about the vulnerability of the Global South vis-à-vis the climate crisis, de Wit et al. (2018) approach the issue from the angle of “the idea of climate change” and how this idea travels around the world. They define it as “a set of various concepts, models and representations that comprises of scientific information about climate and climate change, which undergoes continuous translation by an array of translators such as scientists, journalists, governments, NGOs, activists, anthropologists, local communities etc.” (de Wit et al., 2018, p. 3). Here, the idea of climate crisis is the overall narrative that determines the framework through which local atmospheric changes will be interpreted. De Wit and her colleagues argue that despite the dominant narratives in the Global North about the alleged helplessness of Indigenous communities (across Sub-Saharan Africa, the Philippines or Micronesia, for example), people in these areas create their own climate narratives, based on their own “specific life-worlds, histories, cultures, epistemologies and ontologies” (de Wit et al., 2018, p. 3), sometimes—but not always—mixing them with the global scientific knowledge on the climate crisis. Although “the globally constructed idea of climate change largely travels from centres of

power to the fringes of the world”, it does not travel in a unilinear or uniform fashion, as it is constantly refashioned throughout its travels (de Wit et al., 2018, pp. 13–14) based on the situated and subjective knowledges of the affected communities. Power relations at play in the new destinations further reshape “the translation and appropriation” of the very idea of the climate crisis as different agents struggle to define and redefine it (de Wit et al., 2018, p. 11). The assumed authority and epistemic superiority of scientific discourses on the climate crisis elaborated in the Global North is challenged in the new environments, and the climate crisis itself “becomes a malleable political resource, empowering some while disempowering others” (de Wit et al., 2018, p. 9).

- 24 In this context, adaptation programmes and projects are transformed beyond immediate responses to changes in the climate (Weisser et al., 2014, p. 111). They are continuously negotiated, appropriated, and modified. They can also be heavily politicized by various agents according to their own agendas: governments “employing the adaptation argument to establish state control over water and forest resources”; traditional authorities “reinventing themselves as ‘custodians of the earth’ to regain lost legitimacy”; NGOs “embracing the adaptation idea to access donor funding for ‘green projects’”; and civil society organizations “fighting for property rights to land, pasture and water in order to prevent detrimental open-access situations” (Weisser et al., 2014, p. 112). Thus, the idea of climate adaptation is transformed in its travels according to specific socio-economic and political agendas, and dominant needs and interests in target destinations.
- 25 These are certainly not novel observations from the perspective of translation studies scholars. Decades of research within the field have amply demonstrated that target cultures are never passive receivers of translations into their respective languages. From the manner in which texts and ideas are selected for translation and others discarded or ignored, to the way in which the translations are carried out, disseminated and applauded, or criticized, manipulated and reshaped, target cultures have always found different ways of interacting with translations of texts and ideas—even when they are not the initiators of the translation process, as in colonial encounters. Yet given the anxieties around ‘appropriate’ and ‘effective’ knowledge

translation, and the traditional view of scientists as *the* knowledge producers, such active involvement of audiences in making sense of climate crisis discourse can be seen as problematic, if not downright threatening, to the authority of climate science and scientists.

- 26 The dynamic participation of audiences is most evident in the linguistic and cultural choices they make in relation to climate crisis terminology. Most climate crisis research is produced in and circulates through English, and yet there is little debate about the inherent Anglocentrism of the climate crisis discourse.⁶ If the issue is approached at all, it is usually to reiterate the alleged untranslatability of Western climate discourse, especially its terminology, into non-Western languages. Some anthropologists who work on the climate crisis have begun to question this lacuna and are pointing out that in societies where human activities are inseparable from atmospheric conditions—that is, where there is less of a divide between nature and society/culture—talking about the environment or climate independently of the society in question is not possible: “Outside of the realms of science, vernacular terminologies of ‘climate’ or the ways in which climate change is translated, rarely refer to atmospheric conditions alone, but rather encompass broader socio-cultural dimensions and reflect specific ontologies” (de Wit et al., 2018, p. 5). Researchers in the Global North could learn a great deal from this literature—for instance, in relation to the way languages are changing in Indigenous cultures due to environmental transformations. Macfarlane (2019) offers the example of the Inuktitut of Baffin Island (in the Canadian Arctic), who started to use a word that simultaneously refers to “the changes in the weather, the changes in the ice, and the consequent changes in the people themselves. The word is *uggianaqtuq*—meaning ‘to behave strangely, unpredictably’” (p. 335).

- 27 Rudiak-Gould similarly writes about multiple attempts to translate climate change terminology into Marshallese, leading to the introduction of loanwords and phrases from English such as ‘climate change’, ‘global warming’, and ‘greenhouse effect’ (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 48). While people in the Marshall Islands are familiar with these loanwords, climate change is often translated and referred to as *oktak in mejatoto* (change/difference of *mejatoto*). The meanings of *mejatoto* are much more diverse and complex than the English term

“climate”. Marshallese, like many other languages, “offers no way to distinguish, with a single word, between ‘meteorological conditions in the short term’ (‘weather’) and ‘average meteorological conditions in the long term’ (‘climate’)” (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 49). More importantly, it is difficult to find a single word in Marshallese which would only refer to meteorological conditions. For the islanders, *mejatoto* can therefore denote “environmental” phenomena far beyond “climate” or “weather” in English (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 49). It can refer to a recent solar eclipse, alleged changes in people’s behaviour such as increased laziness or unwillingness to cooperate with/take care of one’s family members and neighbours, or even perceived accelerations in the passing of time. In short, “*mejatoto* can [...] encompass what Westerners would consider purely ‘sociocultural,’ rather than ‘environmental,’ phenomena” (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 49). As a result, although climate change is a familiar, everyday, and easily understood phrase, for the locals of the Marshall Islands it “differs dramatically from scientists’ notion of climate change” (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 50).

- 28 Rudiak-Gould explains the underlying epistemology as a conceptual framework that does not recognize any distinction between environmental and sociocultural phenomena or issues. “*Mejatoto* is not polysemous, per se—it only appears that way to those from a cultural background that separates nature and culture”, he writes (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 50). In cultures such as the Marshallese, translating terms such as “climate” or “weather” faithfully would introduce a completely new concept into a society that does not draw a distinction between nature and culture, a concept “which excludes ‘social’ phenomena—a radically foreignizing, ‘abusive’ translation strategy, unlikely to resonate with locals” (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 52). The conflation of beyond-meteorological issues with climate change does not prevent the Marshallese from noticing, commenting on and acting according to observed environmental conditions. They are keenly aware of daily, yearly, and intergenerational changes in the climate (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 51). Yet all the observed and experienced changes of the modern world make it extremely easy for the Marshallese to believe in *oktak in mejatoto*/climate change as a whole, through a process Rudiak-Gould (2012) calls “promiscuous corroboration” (p. 51). Here, the conceptual area covered by *oktak*

in mejatoto is not a result of mistranslation, but of an acute awareness of the interdependence of environmental and social phenomena. “If one discards the unidirectional model of science education in favor of a bidirectional model of dialogue”, observes Rudiak Gould (2012)—i.e., if scientific communication can go beyond the simplistic model of knowledge translation communicated by the scientists to a general audience, or even beyond a dialogue where the scientists’ main aim remains to persuade their audiences to change their behaviour—the apparent ‘mistranslation’ will instead be understood “as a reinterpretation” in which “the Marshallese view of climate change as a hybrid sociocultural/ environmental risk emerges as a wholly reasonable, and indeed insightful and sorely needed, framing of the issue” (p. 52). Such perceptive dialogue between scientists and local communities would go beyond the limitations of knowledge translation discussed earlier, and even beyond the arguably superficial enhancement of the meta-narrative of climate crisis through the incorporation of local and personal narratives. It would dig deep down into the root of the problem in climate sciences as currently conducted in the Global North by exposing the heritage of Cartesian dualism implicitly dominating the debate. It could ultimately encourage climate scientists to overcome their concern with getting the message across and open their minds to novel perspectives introduced by their audiences. As Rudiak-Gould (2012) argues, climate scientists can usefully teach inhabitants of the Marshall Islanders that solar eclipses are not related to global warming, but the Marshall Islanders can also teach climate scientists that global warming and changes in society and cultural environment are closely related—and “if Marshallese conceptions of climate change are too wide, perhaps scientific conceptions are too narrow” (pp. 52–53).

Implications

- 29 On his personal website (<http://www.peterrg.com/academic.html>), Rudiak-Gould poses the question: “What would happen if we saw climate change as a local issue and not a global one?”. While I began this article by referring to the global nature of the conversation on the climate crisis, I have emphasized throughout that locality is *the* determining factor in achieving effective action to address this crisis. The shift in focus from the global to the local will inevitably bring the

issues arising from the climate emergency closer to the hearts and minds of people, allowing them to see their daily habits, behavior and perceptions in a new light. Zooming in on the local will also bring to light issues of language and culture—not as hurdles to be overcome but as intellectual wealth to be drawn upon, so that the convictions and expectations of scientists can be challenged.

- 30 Climate scientists and policy makers need to accept that the idea of climate crisis will always be interpreted differently in different locations. Their anxieties are not drastically different from, say, literary authors' anxiety over the translation of their work into new languages. What might be considered as 'manipulation' of their work often yields more creative perspectives. In relation to the climate crisis, the world does need all its creative potential to develop local solutions, both for mitigation and adaptation purposes. As long as a multi-professional conversation can be sustained between local communities, policy makers and scientists, collaborative translations could prove more effective than mainstream practices of unilateral knowledge translation and the subsequent translation of this knowledge into action. The emerging translational ecology is one such area where collaborations are being undertaken between scientists, stakeholders, and policy makers in order to produce transdisciplinary and multi-professional research that is problem-oriented and actionable in the real world.
- 31 The holistic conceptualization of nature and culture as interdependent, as outlined above, provides insight into the difficulties Western scientists seem to experience in seeing their findings disseminated through knowledge translation and then translated into action. Knowledge translation is supposed to act as a bridge—a highly problematic metaphor from the point of view of translation studies, often disguising the power differentials involved. But translation can only 'act as a bridge' to the extent that the constructed gap between nature and society is sustained. It is not only the Marshallese who have highly sophisticated understandings of the relationships between culture and nature, people and their environment. For the majority of the global population who do not speak English or other European languages from which climate science mostly originates, "translational effects are likely to be large and consequential in most cases of climate change communication" (Rudiak-Gould, 2012, p. 52).

If climate scientists are finding it difficult to translate their work into local discourses and policies, both interlingually and metaphorically, it may be that they need to pay more attention to where the rifts and fractures arise in the communication. It is within these ostensible breakdowns that one might find breakthroughs for more meaningful exchanges.

- 32 The perpetual deferral of the ‘translator’ in climate crisis discourse—that is, the deferral of responsibility for translating scientific information into viable action by scientists, governments, institutions, and lay people—may have its origins in the rather vague and metaphorical use of translation as converting information into action. The rich body of work on translational agents and embodied translators in translation studies may prove helpful in this regard, redirecting the focus from the abstract notion of how translation should be carried out, to how specific actors and agents are already doing the actual translation work on the ground. Such a concrete focus could shed light on the agendas, baggage, and motives of the ‘translators’ in question, helping to explain their decisions and offer other alternatives for future translations of climate science communication that are more nuanced and more attentive to issues of locality.
- 33 As far as knowledge translation is concerned, I have presented the arguments for highlighting the direct socio-economic implications of the climate crisis on the basis that these arguments are more likely to motivate populations to act; this might mean, for example, talking about maple syrup rather than maple trees. It is important to reiterate here that this epistemological approach clearly favors an anthropocentric perspective in communicating information about the climate crisis. Such information is only deemed relevant to the extent that it has a direct impact on the human species—its only target audience—and can spur people to change their opinions and behavior. Based on a rather pessimistic view of the human capacity for empathy, this strategy may end up reinforcing the very anthropocentrism underlying our contemporary emergency. Climate crisis and other forms of environmental degradation become relevant only to the extent that humans—their economy, subsistence, even hobbies such as game fishing—are directly impacted. Arguments for a more progressive politics than this capitalist translation of the impact of the climate crisis on human consumption can have the same anthro-

pocentric focus. In his observations on climate justice and translation, Michael Cronin (2020a) argues that even the concept of climate justice “replicates the ideology of human exceptionalism which is at the origin of the current ecological crisis” (pp. 289–290), focused as it is on what is valued by and matters to humans. Hence, he suggests, “notions of climate justice and translation need to move beyond the strict purview of the human if they are not to be complicit in ecologically damaging forms of subjection” (Cronin, 2020a, pp. 289–290).

- 34 Climate crisis communication is beginning to open up to wider perspectives and to take into account the cultural, local, and situated knowledges of its diverse human interlocutors. However, it needs to go further in its conceptualization of the idea of climate crisis and take the beyond-the-human into its purview. In this context, translation studies may offer insights into how to approach otherness and others respectfully, on their own terms, as much as is humanly possible. Recent interest in interspecies communication and how translation studies could contribute to these debates raises some hope in this respect (Barcz & Cronin, 2023; Fraunhofer, 2023; Susam-Saraeva, in press; Van Vuuren, 2022).
- 35 From its focus on how to achieve effective communication while still preserving and respecting alterity to its attentiveness to linguistic and cultural intricacies of translation, from its expertise on travelling ideas and theories to its foregrounding of the active and embodied agents within any translation process, translation studies can and should offer valuable insights to those engaged in discourses on the climate crisis. For this to happen, however, a productive, transdisciplinary dialogue must be established between translation studies scholars and researchers from a wide range of disciplines. It is through such dialogue that we can develop a more robust theorization of the ways in which climate crisis discourse travels around the globe, and how it is adopted, adapted, and recreated in each locality, language, and culture.

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NOTES

1 Throughout this article, I use the terms climate crisis and climate emergency interchangeably, as is often the case in the relevant discourse. While there is no consensus on whether these terms do better justice to the situation we are currently facing, they are still deemed more factual than climate change and global warming, both of which were criticized for understating the problem and misleading the public. When referring to existing scholarship, however, some quotes will feature the term climate change.

2 It is important to note at the outset that the arguments presented here in favor of recognizing the significance of locality and the crucial role that languages, interlingual translation and cultural reception play in responses to the climate crisis are very different from the way far-right policies dangerously emphasize the local when addressing environmental issues (Forchtner, 2020). A right-wing view may see the local as the only important thing to focus on, while the rest of the world can be destroyed; the approach I am envisaging here advocates caring for the local in order to care for the global.

3 In the field of medicine, bodies like the World Health Organization and national health governance institutions such as the NHS in Britain issue official guidelines to be used in particular cases/diseases, and thus ensure that practitioners on the ground are provided with state-of-the-art knowledge on the subject. Unlike the use of knowledge translation in climate crisis discourse, there is an institutional machinery and a particularization of the subject of knowledge in the case of knowledge translation in medicine.

4 My use of narrative is informed by the work of Engebretsen and Baker (2022) on scientific evidence received through the prism of competing and contradictory narratives. The authors, in turn, base their account on Fisher's (1987) narrative paradigm, which assumes that "[n]o matter how

strictly a case is argued—scientifically, philosophically, or legally—it will always be a story, an interpretation of some aspect of the world that is historically and culturally grounded and shaped by human personality” (p. 49). Engebretsen and Baker (2022) stress that even the most abstract of scientific arguments and claims are ultimately interpreted as stories that are informed by particular narrative takes on the world (p. 8). I also refer to Baker’s (2019) work on personal, public, and meta-narratives at different points in this article.

5 Given the limited scope of this article, I have focused solely on news items published in the UK-based newspaper *The Guardian*, which is one of the few news outlets in English to feature a dedicated daily section on ‘Climate Crisis’. This choice is certainly limiting; however, I am not aiming to be comprehensive here but to provide examples of the use of the term “translation” in news on climate crisis discourse.

6 For a discussion of this issue from the perspective of translation studies, see Todorova (2022).

ABSTRACTS

English

Discourse on the climate crisis is intrinsically dependent on and intertwined with the concept of translation. The term is used in distinct but interrelated senses in the relevant literature. The first, reflected in the term “knowledge translation”, generally refers to the dissemination of research findings to stakeholders and the general population. The second, closely related sense of translation concerns the rendering of scientific knowledge into effective action rather than merely disseminating it. These two interrelated meanings account for the bulk of references to translation in climate crisis discourse. Finally, reference is also made in climate crisis discourse to the more familiar but less acknowledged understanding of translation as rendering research papers, children’s literature addressing eco-anxiety, and other written material into different languages, as well as interpreting in international climate summits. This contribution analyzes these different uses of the concept of translation in climate crisis discourse and discusses their implications. The analysis is supported by examples from scholarly texts and news media, and the aim is to shed light on the workings of climate crisis discourse through the lens of translation. I argue that a renewed focus on the local through a foregrounding of interlingual translation—the least explored sense of translation in this literature—may help address some of the issues currently faced by scientists and policy makers.

A synopsis of this article can be found [here](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.479) (https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.479).

العربية

يحمل مصطلح "الترجمة" معانٍ متميزة ومتداخلة في سياق أزمة المناخ؛ إذ يُشير أحد هذه المعاني إلى "ترجمة المعرفة"؛ من خلال نشر نتائج البحوث إلى الجهات المعنية والجمهور العام. أما المعنى الثاني فيُعنى بتحويل المعرفة العلمية إلى إجراءات فعّالة بدلاً من مجرد نشرها. كما يرتبط خطاب أزمة المناخ بالمفهوم الأكثر شيوعاً للترجمة؛ إذ يشير إلى إعادة صياغة الأوراق البحثية وأدب الأطفال، وغيرها من المواد المكتوبة حول المخاوف البيئية وأزمة المناخ إلى لغاتٍ مختلفة، علاوةً على الترجمة الشفوية في قمم المناخ الدولية. يدرس هذا البحث المعاني المختلفة للترجمة في سياق أزمة المناخ؛ باستخدام أمثلة من النصوص العلمية ووسائل الإعلام الإخبارية. ويرى الباحث أنّ الترجمة تتطلب مراعاة العوامل المحلية للجمهور المستهدف؛ مما قد يساهم في معالجة بعض التحديات التي تواجه الخبراء وصنّاع السياسات؛ حيث لم يُدرس هذا الموضوع دراسةً وافيةً سابقاً.

بإمكانكم الاطلاع على ملخص المقالات عبر هذا الرابط. <https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-tr> (anslation.701)

বাংলা

জলবায়ু সংকট সম্পর্কিত চর্চা অনুবাদের ধারণার উপর অবিচ্ছেদ্যভাবে নির্ভরশীল। এই শব্দটি প্রাসঙ্গিক সাহিত্যে স্বতন্ত্র, কিন্তু আন্তঃসম্পর্কে, সব আলোচনার সাথে জড়িয়ে আছে। প্রথমটি, 'জ্ঞান অনুবাদ' অর্থে স্টেকহোল্ডার (stakeholders) এবং সাধারণ জনগণের কাছে গবেষণার ফলাফলের প্রচারকে বোঝায়। দ্বিতীয় সম্পর্কটি শুধুমাত্র বৈজ্ঞানিক জ্ঞানকে প্রচার করার পরিবর্তে তা কার্যকরী করার সাথেও ঘনিষ্ঠভাবে সম্পর্কিত। এই দুটি আন্তঃসম্পর্ক জলবায়ু সংকট অনুবাদের ক্ষেত্রে বেশি চর্চিত। পরিশেষে, জলবায়ু সংকট চর্চায় অনুবাদের আরও পরিচিত, তবে কম স্বীকৃত, প্রবণতা হলো গবেষণা পত্রগুলি অনুবাদ করা, শিশুদের সাহিত্যে পরিবেশ - উদ্বেগকে সম্বোধন করা এবং অন্যান্য লিখিত উপাদানগুলি বিভিন্ন ভাষায় উপস্থাপন করা, এবং এর পাশাপাশি আন্তর্জাতিক জলবায়ু শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের আলোচনাসমূহের ধারাবিবরণী (interpretation) পেশ/ব্যখ্যা করা। এই প্রবন্ধে জলবায়ু সংকট চর্চায় অনুবাদ ধারণার এই বিভিন্ন ব্যবহারের বিশ্লেষণ এবং তাদের প্রভাব নিয়ে আলোচনা করা হয়েছে। এই বিশ্লেষণগুলি মূলতঃবৌদ্ধিক পাঠ্য এবং সংবাদ মাধ্যমের উদাহরণগুলির দ্বারা সমর্থিত, এবং এর প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য হল জলবায়ু সংকট চর্চাকে অনুবাদের আতসকাঁচ দিয়ে অনুধাবন করা। এই ধরনের জ্ঞান স্থানান্তরের প্রয়োজনীয়তা থাকা সত্ত্বেও, বিজ্ঞানী এবং নীতি নির্ধারকরা ক্রমবর্ধমানভাবে স্বীকৃতি দিচ্ছেন যে তাঁদেরও স্থানীয় সম্প্রদায়ের বিভিন্ন অভিজ্ঞতার কথা শুনতে হবে এবং তা থেকে শিখতে হবে। আমার যুক্তিতে আন্তঃ-ভাষিক অনুবাদকে পুরোভাগে রেখে, যা এই ধরনের সাহিত্যে এতদিন সবচেয়ে কম প্রাধান্য পেয়েছে, স্থানিকের/ আঞ্চলিকতার ওপর নতুন করে জোর দেওয়া বর্তমানে বিজ্ঞানী এবং নীতি নির্ধারকদের কিছু সমস্যার সমাধান করতে পারে।

প্রবন্ধটির সারসংক্ষেপ এখানে <https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.730> পাওয়া যাবে।

Español

El discurso sobre la crisis climática depende y está entrelazado intrínsecamente con el concepto de traducción. El término se utiliza en sentidos distintos pero interrelacionados en la literatura relevante. El primero, reflejado en el término “traducción de conocimiento”, se refiere a la difusión de los resultados de la investigación entre las partes interesadas y la población en general. El segundo, estrechamente relacionado con el anterior, se refiere a la transformación de los conocimientos científicos en acciones efectivas, más que a su mera difusión. Estos dos significados interrelacionados explican la mayor parte de las referencias a la traducción en el discurso sobre la crisis climática. Por último, en el discurso sobre la crisis climática también hace referencia a la interpretación de la traducción, más familiar pero menos reconocida, como la traducción a otros idiomas de trabajos de investigación, literatura infantil sobre la ansiedad ecológica y otros materiales escritos, así como la interpretación en cumbres internacionales sobre el clima. Esta contribución analiza los diferentes usos del concepto de traducción en discursos de crisis climática a través del lente de la traducción. Mi argumento es que una atención renovada hacia lo local a través de la traducción interlingüística -el sentido menos explorado de la traducción en esta literatura- puede ayudar a resolver algunos de los problemas a los que se enfrentan actualmente los científicos y los responsables políticos.

Aquí (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.591>) se puede acceder a una sinopsis de este artículo

हिन्दी

जलवायु संकट पर विमर्श आंतरिक रूप से अनुवाद की अवधारणा पर निर्भर है और उसके साथ जुड़ा हुआ है। इन शब्दों का उपयोग प्रासंगिक साहित्य में विशिष्ट लेकिन परस्पर संबंधित अर्थों में किया जाता है। इस विमर्श का पहला अर्थ 'ज्ञानअनुवाद' को दर्शाता है। यह हितधारकों और आम लोगों के लिए शोध निष्कर्षों के प्रसार को संदर्भित करता है। दूसरे अर्थ का अनुवाद-भावना से नज़दीकी जुड़ाव है। यह वैज्ञानिक ज्ञान को केवल प्रसारित करने के बजाय प्रभावी कार्रवाई में प्रस्तुत करता है। ये दोनों अर्थ आपस में जुड़े हुए हैं और जलवायु-संकट विमर्श में अनुवाद के अधिकांश संदर्भों के लिए जिम्मेदार हैं। अंत में, जलवायु-संकट के विमर्श में अनुवाद की अधिक परिचित लेकिन कम स्वीकृत विचारों का भी संदर्भ दिया गया है। इनमें शोधपत्र, पर्यावरण-उद्देश को संबोधित करने वाले बाल-साहित्य, और अन्य लिखित सामग्री को विभिन्न भाषाओं में प्रस्तुत करने के साथ-साथ अंतर्राष्ट्रीय जलवायु शिखर सम्मेलनों में व्याख्या करना भी शामिल है। यह अभिदान जलवायु संकट विमर्श में अनुवाद की अवधारणा के इन विभिन्न उपयोगों का विश्लेषण करता है और उनके निहितार्थ पर चर्चा करता है। यह विश्लेषण विद्वान-ग्रंथों और समाचार-माध्यम के उदाहरणों द्वारा समर्थित है, और इसका उद्देश्य अनुवाद द्वारा जलवायु संकट विमर्श के कार्यों पर प्रकाश डालना है। अंतरभाषीय अनुवाद में स्थानीय पर ध्यान इस साहित्य में अनुवाद की सबसे कम खोजी गई भावना है। मेरा तर्क है कि अंतरभाषीय अनुवाद को आगे रखके स्थानीय पर नए सिरे से ध्यान केंद्रित करना वर्तमान में वैज्ञानिकों और नीति निर्माताओं के सामने आने वाले कुछ मुद्दों को हल करने में मदद कर सकती है। इस लेख का सारांश यहाँ पाया जा सकता है। (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.734>)

Magyar

Az éghajlati válságot övező diskurzus alapvetően függ a fordítás fogalmától és fonódik vele egyszerre össze. A kifejezést különböző, de egymással összefüggő jelentésekben használják a vonatkozó szakirodalomban. Az első, melyet a 'tudás-fordítás' kifejezésével jelölnek, a kutatási eredmények hozzáférhetővé tételére utal az érintettek, valamint a széleskörű lakosság számára. A második, ehhez szorosan kapcsolódó fordítás-értelmezés a tudományos tudás hatékony cselekvésbe való átfordítását takarja, mintsem annak pusztá elméleti terjesztését. Ez a két összefüggő jelentés képezi az éghajlati válságot tárgyaló diskurzusban található fordításra való utalások többségét. Végezetül a klimakatasztrófa-diskurzusban azzal a közismertebb, de kevésbé elismert fordítás-felfogással is találkozni, amely tudományos publikációk, a klímaszorongást célzó gyermekirodalom és egyéb írott szövegek különféle nyelvekre történő átvitelét, valamint a nemzetközi klímacsúcsokon való tolmácsolást takarja. Ez a tanulmány a fordítás fogalmának e különböző jellegű felhasználásait vizsgálja az éghajlati krízist övező diskurzusban és megvitatja azok következményeit. Az elemzést tudományos szövegekből és hírportálokról származó példák segítik—a cél pedig nem más, mint a fordítás lencséjén keresztül megvilágítani az éghajlati válságot övező diskurzus működését. Azt állítom, hogy a lokálisra való megújult összpontosítás a nyelvek közti fordítás előtérbe helyezése által (amely a szakirodalomban a legkevésbé feltárt fordítástípus) segíthet körbejárni néhány olyan problémát, amelyekkel a tudósok és döntéshozók jelenleg szembenéznek.

A tanulmány összefoglalója [itt](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.593) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.593>) olvasható

Türkçe

İklim krizi söylemi, küresel bir söylem olarak doğası gereği çeviri kavramına bağlıdır. Terim İngilizce'deki ilgili literatürde farklı, ancak birbiriyle ilişkili anlamlarda kullanılmaktadır. İlk olarak bilgi çevirisi ("knowledge translation") terimi, araştırma bulgularının hem ilgili kişi ve kurumlarla, hem de genel nüfusla paylaşılması anlamına gelir. Çevirinin, bilgi çevirisiyle yakından ilişkili ikinci anlamı, bilimsel bilginin yalnızca yayılmasından ziyade etkili eylemlere dönüştürülmesini kapsar. Birbiriyle ilişkili bu iki anlam, İngilizce'deki iklim krizi söyleminde çeviriye yapılan atıfların büyük kısmını oluşturur. Son olarak, iklim krizi söyleminde çeviri, araştırma makalelerinin, eko-kaygıyı ele alan çocuk edebiyatının ve diğer yazılı metinlerin farklı dillere çevrilmesi, uluslararası iklim zirvelerinde tercümanlık yapılması gibi daha tanıdık, ama daha az dikkat çeken etkinliklere de gönderme yapmaktadır. Bu makalede, çeviri kavramının iklim krizi söylemindeki farklı kullanımları inceleniyor ve bunların sonuçları tartışılıyor. İklim krizi söyleminin işleyişine çeviri gözüyle ışık tutmak amacıyla yapılan bu inceleme, akademik metinlerden ve medya haberlerinden alınan örneklerle destekleniyor. İlgili literatürde en az araştırılan dillerarası çevirinin ön plana çıkarılması yoluyla yerel olana odaklanmanın, biliminsanlarının ve politika belirleyicilerin karşı karşıya kaldıkları bazı sorunları çözmelerine yardımcı olabileceği ileri sürülüyor.

Makalenin genişletilmiş bir özetine [buradan](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.518) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.518>) ulaşabilirsiniz.

中文

关于气候危机的话语本质上依赖于翻译这个概念，并且与其交织在一起。在相关文献中，对这一术语的使用，含义各异，但又相互关联。第一种含义反映在“知识转译”（knowledge translation）一词中，指的是将研究成果传播给利益相关者和普通民众。第二种与翻译密切相关的含义是将科学知识转化为有效的行动，而不仅仅是传播它。这两种相互关联的含义构成了气候危机话语中与翻译相关的大部分参考内容。最后，在气候危机话语中还提到了对翻译更熟悉但较少被承认的理解，即将研究论文、针对生态焦虑的儿童文学和其他书面材料翻译成不同的语言，以及在国际气候峰会上进行的传译。本文分析了翻译这一概念在气候危机话语中的不同用法，并讨论了它们的含义。该分析得到了学术文本和新闻媒体中的例证支持，目的是通过翻译的视角阐明气候危机话语的运作方式。我认为，通过强调语际翻译——文献中被探讨最少的翻译形式——重新关注当地情况，可能有助于解决科学家和政策制定者目前面临的一些问题。

本文的概要可以在这里查阅 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.590>)。

INDEX

Keywords

climate crisis, knowledge translation, interlingual translation, locality

الكلمات المفتاحية

أزمة المناخ، ترجمة المعرفة، الترجمة بين اللغات، العوامل المحلية

কীওয়ার্ড

জলবায়ু সংকট, জ্ঞান অনুবাদ, আন্তঃভাষিক অনুবাদ, স্থানিক/আঞ্চলিকতা

Palabras claves

crisis climática, traducción de conocimiento, traducción interlingüística, localidad

कीवर्ड

जलवायु संकट, ज्ञान अनुवाद, अंतरभाषीय अनुवाद, स्थान

Kulcsszavak

Éghajlati krízis, tudásfordítás, nyelvek közti fordítás, lokalitás

Anahtar kelimeler

iklim krizi, bilgi çevirisi, dillerarası çeviri, yerellik

关键词

气候危机, 知识转译, 语际翻译, 地方性

AUTHOR

Şebnem Susam-Saraeva

University of Edinburgh, Scotland

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/117469688>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8249-0047>

ISNI : <http://www.isni.org/0000000048792765>

BNF : <https://data.bnf.fr/fr/15510866>

Hierarchical vs. horizontal political translation in post-15M Spain

الترجمة السياسية الهرمية والأفقية في إسبانيا عَقِبَ تأسيس حركة إم-15

Traducció política jeràrquica vs. horitzontal en l'Espanya post 15-M

Traducción política jerárquica y horizontal tras el 15-M en España

Hierarchikus vs. horizontális politikai fordítás a 15M utáni Spanyolországban

Hierarkisk versus horisontal politisk oversettelse i post-15M Spania

15M Hareketi Sonrası İspanya'da Öne Çıkan Hiyerarşik ve Yatay Siyasi Çeviri Pratikleri

Fruela Fernández

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OUTLINE

The complex history of the 15M and the role of translation in the political 'climate'

A political signifier in the 15M climate: Hierarchical vs. horizontal translation
Translation, narrative, and expertise

TEXT

- 1 For a number of decades now, extended notions of translation that go beyond understanding it strictly as a process of interlinguistic transfer have become central to a variety of theoretical frameworks and approaches across the humanities and social sciences—from the classical vision of anthropology as a process of cultural translation (Pálsson, 1993, p. 1–2; Sturge, 2007, pp. 5–6) to the more recent engagement with the concept of knowledge translation as a key element in medicine and the medical humanities (Holm et al., 2015, pp. 86–87; Engebretsen et al., 2020). Translation is now also a common concept in sociology (Callon, 1986; Bielsa, 2022), philosophy (Serres, 1974; Ricœur, 2006), communication studies (Conway, 2020), and literary theory (Bertacco, 2014, p. 146), among other disciplines. This process of extending the concept of translation beyond its traditional confines has been so widespread and intense that Bachmann–

Medick (2009), among others, has argued that many disciplines are experiencing a “translational turn”.

- 2 Against this background, it is striking that the fields of politics and political theory have rarely been taken into account in discussions of extended understandings of translation. Despite the rich corpus of this tradition—featuring highly influential thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci (Boothman, 2010; Lacorte, 2010), Judith Butler (2000), Jacques Rancière (2008) and Antonio Negri (Negri and Hardt, 2009, 2017)—and the recent surge and popularization of the concept of translation in activist circles (Baker, 2016, p. 3; Fernández, 2018), the use of translation in political theory and social movement studies has received little attention in translation studies. Even Kobus Marais’s wide-ranging collection *Translation Beyond Translation Studies* (2022), which deals with how a wide range of disciplines conceptualize translation, fails to address either politics or political theory.¹
- 3 In what follows I aim to address this gap by analyzing two extended conceptualizations of translation that have gained prominence in the discourse and intellectual practice of the Spanish radical left after the movement known as “15M”, or “indignados”. I propose to refer to these different conceptualizations as hierarchical and horizontal translation and will argue that it is important to distinguish between them in order to understand the political contradictions that have plagued this movement and its political aftermath. The distinction is also particularly useful in terms of allowing us to examine the different conceptions of expertise that have characterized this political period and the narratives associated with them.² As will become clear from the discussion that follows, the concept of translation itself became a tool for the elaboration of counter-narratives that challenge official discourses, thus playing an important role in undermining the narrative foundations of mainstream politics while offering alternative explanations and arguments for a society in crisis.

The complex history of the 15M and the role of translation in the political ‘climate’

- 4 The 15M movement owes its name to the date (15 May 2011) that saw the beginning of a series of occupations of squares and public spaces across Spain to protest the consequences and management of the economic crisis. Inspired by the many uprisings and revolutions that had taken place across Arab countries, the 15M played an important role in the evolution of the so-called movement of the squares, becoming its first European and Western “cluster” (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 31). As in the case of other occupations, these improvised camps attracted citizens from various social strata who engaged in open discussions on social, political, and economic issues at popular assemblies and committees (Della Porta, 2015, pp. 1–2). The squares became sites where a political practice typical of new social movements and known as prefiguration (Maeckelbergh, 2011) unfolded: instead of deferring the construction of their envisaged society to the future, protesters aimed to construct it there and then, in the temporary setting of the squares. In line with this political culture, assemblies rejected representative, party-based democracy and came to function as an experiment in direct democracy (Sitrin and Azzellini, 2014, p. 121–150; Della Porta, 2015, pp. 157–210), where every person was encouraged to speak and to contribute to the discussion, irrespective of their cultural or professional background, and of their level of expertise in a given subject.
- 5 Although occupations only lasted a few weeks, the 15M made a profound imprint on Spanish society, destabilizing the political configuration of the country and bringing new debates to the fore. In this sense, it quickly went beyond the strict notion of a movement to become what philosopher and activist Amador Fernández-Savater (2012) proposed calling a “climate” (clima) that impregnated political debates throughout the country. At the same time, the initial reluctance of the movement to engage in traditional politics soon became an issue of contention, with some social sectors feeling increasingly frustrated with the limitations of popular protest (Rendueles and

Sola, 2015). The movement as a whole thus began to face what some referred to as its “glass ceiling” (Rodríguez 2016, pp. 69–72; Fernández-Savater, 2019, p. 29), meaning that while activists could clearly see their goals, the mainstream institutions and the establishment prevented them from achieving success. This eventually led to the emergence of a variety of political platforms, among which Podemos (created in late 2014) became both the most successful and the most controversial. While it is true that the party achieved unprecedented political visibility for a radical left-wing project, becoming a minor partner in a coalition government with the social-democrat PSOE in 2020 and leading several key ministries, it has also been criticized for co-opting the movement, streamlining, and taming it, and demobilizing citizens (López, 2016, 2019; Rodríguez, 2020). Indeed, many of the founding members of Podemos have since left the party, which has gradually lost most of its local and regional power. At the national level, it has not fared much better: while five national deputies were elected at the 2023 general election, its numerous conflicts with other left-wing parties prevented Podemos from joining the new cabinet, led again by the PSOE, and it has subsequently moved from being a member of the ruling coalition to playing the role of the opposition.

- 6 As I have demonstrated elsewhere at greater lengths (Fernández, 2018; 2020a; 2020b), translation has been a central feature of Spanish culture and politics since the 15M, and key to the global critique of Spanish society and history developed by the movement and its successors. After the end of the Francoist dictatorship, Spain lived through a period (1980s to early 2000s) that privileged political consensus and the avoidance of subjects considered controversial for the new democratic system; in the cultural and artistic field, this led to political disengagement (Echevarría, 2012). As a consequence of this long process of depoliticization, participants in the 15M movement were faced with a pressing need to search for alternative models, references and ideas, as earlier ones were no longer valid. In this context, translation came to play a central role within the 15M climate, as has frequently been the case at other historical “turning points” or during “crises”, according to Even-Zohar (1990, p. 47).
- 7 The centrality of translation in the 15M climate is evident in three main areas, discussed in more detail in Fernández (2020a). First,

translation featured prominently in the catalogues of the vast majority of politically committed publishers. Similar in their political stance to the Anglo-American ‘radical publishers’ and the French ‘*éditeurs engagés*’, these publishers gained popularity since the beginning of the 2011 economic crisis. In most cases, translated books constituted more than 50% of volumes in series focusing on economics, politics, political theory, and related fields (Fernández, 2020a, pp. 40–43). At the same time, these translations have been perceived as an important political tool, with a variety of activists and politicians involved in their dissemination and/or in the production of their paratexts (Fernández, 2020a, pp. 43–46). A second and related area concerns the enhanced visibility of translated authors such as Judith Butler (Cabré, 2015), Slavoj Žižek (Público, 2017), Angela Davis (Gutiérrez and Borraz, 2018) and Silvia Federici (Martínez, 2018), among others, who attracted major attention and spoke to large audiences on visits to Spain, with long queues at the entrance of the venues forcing organizers to provide additional spaces. Such translated authors filled an important gap in the absence of local and national intellectuals of a similar stature. Finally, the 15M climate has also been characterized by the adoption of key political concepts such as commons (communes) and care (cuidados), which have been shaped through complex processes of translation (Fernández, 2020a, pp. 49–89). As Fernández-Savater (2019) has noted, the 15M did not possess “languages, maps or compasses” (*lenguajes, mapas ni brújulas*) of its own (p. 29), a situation which generated a need for constructing new ones through translation and adaptation³.

- 8 Another relevant factor in this context of transformation concerns the incorporation of translation as a political concept in the discourse of a number of activists and political representatives from the new leftist organizations (notably Podemos). As I attempt to demonstrate later in this article, uses of translation as a key concept in this context are diverse and have very different political implications. Nevertheless, they share a similar point of departure: a realization that the language of mainstream politics and the language of the common people are so strongly and profoundly disconnected that any meaningful interaction between them must inevitably rely on practices of translation. During my fieldwork, I examined how left-wing politicians, activists, and citizens in post-15M Spain frequently

resort to a broad notion of translation to highlight the divide between institutional politics—and other key sites of power, such as financial institutions and the media—and general citizens, while also defending the need to foster new attitudes towards, and channels for, mutual communication. Translation thus takes place intralingually (i.e., within the same language), but the criticism obtains its political strength from the practice of interlingual translation: unlike the shift between natural languages such as Spanish and English, ‘political’ languages should not provoke the kind of misunderstanding and incomprehension that require the intervention of a translator—yet they do, as activists and citizens claim.

- 9 Furthermore, some of these practices involve what I call ‘political exposure’: the person who translates the official message does not merely aim to highlight the divide between the mainstream institutions and the average citizen, but also to expose a hidden ideological reality that the original message is assumed to be concealing. In this case, the speaker (or translator) does not only argue that there is a problem of communication, but also engages in denouncing and exposing the ways in which such official languages deliberately misrepresent reality. The text being translated might be an announcement from a government official, an advertisement circulated by a bank, or a piece of news from a media outlet. Whatever the nature and source of the text, the speaker engages in an act of translation that allows them to show both their understanding of, and their disagreement with, the official message. These translators thus acquire what Nicole Doerr (2018), in her approach to “political translation”, has called “a *disruptive third position* within political deliberation” (p. 4; emphasis in original). Since they can understand both languages—the language of the elite and that of the average citizen—, these translators also have the capacity to challenge privileges and asymmetries.⁴
- 10 These practices are epistemologically relevant for at least two main reasons. First, they imply that political intervention requires the possession of a certain knowledge—in this case, familiarity with the different languages of power and their ‘doublespeak’. In other words, they emphasize the importance of knowledge as a political tool and its centrality within the democratic project. Second, they reveal that translation is decisively enmeshed within structures of power, with

the act of decoding and recoding positioning translators clearly as political actors, either as mediators between institutions and citizens or as dissenters who set out to challenge messages circulated by these institutions. The specific forms of political translation that emerge from this encounter recall Baker's (2006) discussion of the centrality of narratives to the functioning of all societies (p. 3). Like all narratives, those that are mediated by political translators in contexts such as the 15M provide part of the ideological infrastructure that holds societies together. Importantly, these narratives are dynamic, which means that at any given time there will be "a variety of divergent, criss-crossing, often vacillating narratives" (Baker, 2006, p. 3) that coexist and/or compete with each other. And since narratives are fundamental to maintaining the legitimacy of the status quo, changing a given social and political reality primarily involves challenging "the stories that sustain [it]" by articulating "alternative stories" (Baker, 2006, p. 3). In the context of the 15M movement, as elsewhere, translation—in all its varieties—served to introduce counternarratives that question and undermine official and mainstream narratives.

A political signifier in the 15M climate: Hierarchical vs. horizontal translation

- 11 Despite their overall similarities, there are important epistemological and political differences between two forms of translation practiced in this context. These I propose to designate as hierarchical vs horizontal translation. Hierarchical translation is characterized by being top-down and is generally based on a subtle distinction between those who understand (critical intellectuals, leftist politicians) and those who do not (the masses, or common people). This notion of the translator as educator has reappeared frequently in the discourse of Podemos's cadres, who rely on their ability to translate to legitimize their role as political representatives. It is worth noting here that many of Podemos's initial cadres were academics from the fields of politics and sociology. This might have played a role in their adoption of such understandings and use of translation, which bear the imprint

of thinkers such as Gramsci, Butler, Bauman, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos.⁵

12 For instance, Íñigo Errejón, one of Podemos' leading figures until his departure in 2019, claimed that an intellectual "is not a curmudgeon who only reads unintelligible stuff, but eminently a translator" (no es un tipo rancio que solo lee cosas incomprensibles, es eminentemente un traductor), one who "has the duty and the ability to take abstract concepts and translate them" (que tiene la obligación y la capacidad de coger conceptos abstractos y traducirlos) (Soto-Trillo, 2015). In a similar vein, Pablo Iglesias, Podemos' General Secretary until 2021, argued that political communication is "a pivotal work of translation: to transform your diagnosis into a discourse that people can understand" (un trabajo fundamental de traducción: transformar tu diagnóstico en un discurso que la gente pueda entender) (interview reported in Guedán, 2016, p. 120). From Iglesias's perspective, it is essential to carry out "translational work" in order to make the specific realities behind complex concepts such as "recessions and crises" understandable in the context of "people's everyday life" (Tenemos que ser capaces de traducir a la cotidianidad de la gente lo que implican las recesiones y las crisis de un sistema que va más allá de los estados) (Iglesias and Nega, 2013, p. 13). Similarly, philosopher Germán Cano (2015, p. 196), who left the party in 2019, praised Iglesias's ability to translate technocratic jargon into a simpler language that is accessible to everyone,⁶ while also showing how elitist discourses are aimed at creating a chasm to isolate experts from the rest of society.

13 Indeed, in the early stages of his political career, Pablo Iglesias himself was the perfect embodiment of this kind of intellectual-translator. As presenter of political shows like *La Tuerka* (*The Screw* or, reflecting the Spanish punk-inspired spelling, *The Skrew*), and *Fort Apache*, Iglesias used his academic training to elaborate alternative arguments and counternarratives. For instance, when the Spanish conservative government started a campaign in 2012 to criminalize and repress popular protests by labelling them as "anti-systemic" (antisistema) (Zaldua, 2012), Iglesias introduced one of his weekly shows (Iglesias, 2012) by explaining Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of anti-systemic movements. Following Wallerstein, Iglesias explained that the movements traditionally considered anti-systemic

due to their opposition to the capitalist, nation-state system—such as the workers’ movement and national liberation movements—are precisely those that had introduced key progressive measures, freedoms, and rights. Thus, with the help of both intra- and interlingual translation, Iglesias turned the derogatory, mainstream use of ‘anti-systemic’ on its head and reappraised it as a positive concept for his audience: being labelled as ‘anti-systemic’ became synonymous with opposing an unfair political system.

- 14 Such uses of translation can be politically transformative because they expose and refute the discourse mobilized by traditional parties, institutions, and powers, while also articulating a self-critique of traditional intellectuals, who fail to see the existing linguistic and cultural divide between themselves and the rest of society. In other words, the new political figure embodied in the figure of the ‘translator’ is someone who is committed to improving communication and understanding, investing considerable effort in ensuring that citizens understand what is implied below the surface of political jargon. However, this practice of translation is also hierarchical because it places the emphasis on the mediating—or even gate-keeping—role of intellectuals and politicians. Citizens are placed in the passive position of receiving translations produced by a specific group of mediators; they are enlightened and educated by these self-appointed translators, but the possibility that citizens themselves might also have translational skills of their own is rarely considered.⁷ This form of unidirectional address is most evident in Pablo Iglesias’s monologues at the beginning of his TV shows, discussed above: sitting at his desk or standing in front of the camera, he occupied that space alone and spoke directly to the audience, without comments or interruptions by anyone else. This was a speaker translating for his viewers, in a context far removed from the collective exchanges that took place at the 15M assemblies. Such a practice of translation clearly undermined the principle of direct democracy that the movement had embodied. Despite attempts at nuancing the meaning and purpose of translation in this context, in practice hierarchical translation still supports a conception of politics based on the core notions of representative democracy, where politicians and intellectuals are understood to be in charge of leading the masses and speaking on their behalf.

- 15 The key difference between hierarchical and horizontal translation lies precisely in this relationship that the speaker establishes with others. As I have argued, a hierarchical translator claims a position of power based on their ability to translate: they speak for the benefit of an audience, with the assumption of eventually being able to speak on its behalf, to be its voice. By contrast, a horizontal translation does not assume that the translator speaks in the name of any collective: he or she simply exercises their individual right to engage in translating a message in political terms, whether that message comes from a government, a company, or a media outlet. Exercising this right certainly involves a claim to be in possession of a given knowledge: in order to decode institutional language, one needs to have mastered its fundamental features. However, in making that implicit claim the horizontal translator does not assume that other citizens are not able to decipher the message for themselves and does not promote his or her translation at the expense of other forms of knowledge. In other words, he or she questions the political message of the original, but without seeking to prevent the emergence of other, equally valid translations. The political and epistemological implications of this practice are therefore quite distinct: the translator is clearly aware of the political centrality of knowledge, but he or she does not establish a political hierarchy based on knowledge (or its perceived absence), nor does he or she derive a position of power or privilege from their assumed knowledge and expertise.
- 16 Examples of horizontal translation can be hard to locate because of the nature of the settings in which it takes place: this type of translation is rarely to be found within those prestigious textual formats that are available to political representatives, such as interviews and books. In fact, my examples are mostly taken from social media and, in the case of this article, exclusively from Twitter.⁸ Examples of horizontal translation are also harder to identify because the practice tends to depart radically from both traditional and even metaphoric understandings of translation. As will become clear in the examples that follow, citizens invoking their right to translate a given message tend to fully decouple its denotative and connotative meanings. In these horizontal translations, what the original text says at its most basic level might bear little resemblance to what the translator proposes it says. The definition of translation as a process of repla-

cing a set of source signs with another set of target signs “on the strength of an interpretation” (Venuti, 1995, p. 18) is taken here to its extreme: what matters for citizen-translators is the exposure of a secondary set of meanings and implications that typically go unnoticed under the surface of the original statement. At the same time, the traditional relationship between author and translator is often completely reversed: the potential intentions of the author of the original utterance are disregarded, as the translator sets out to emphasize his or her own understanding of the message and its implications.

- 17 As already noted, the decoupling of words and meaning within these practices of translation poses some challenges to their analysis. Each horizontal translator deliberately singles out and privileges a certain aspect of the original message and may completely disregard others; what matters for each translator are the political implications of the message. In some cases, a translation may involve minor changes in wording, as the horizontal translator simply attempts to highlight an aspect of the source message that he or she considers vital. An example of this practice can be found in a response given by journalist and cartoonist Ferran Aguiló to a tweet published by the official account for IB3 Notícies, the main news programme broadcast by the public TV corporation of the Balearic Islands. After the release of air traffic data for Son Sant Joan, Palma’s airport and the biggest of the archipelago, IB3 Notícies (2021) tweeted:

L'Aeroport de [#Palma](https://twitter.com/hashtag/Palma?src=hashtag_click) (https://twitter.com/hashtag/Palma?src=hashtag_click) ha entrat durant l'agost en el rànquing dels 10 aeroports del món amb més trànsit internacional. En concret, ara mateix està a la novena posició, segons dades d'OAG. Son Sant Joan ha recuperat el 85% del trànsit aeri del 2019.

This August, Palma’s airport has entered the top ten [list] of the world’s airports with the highest [level of] international traffic. To be more concrete, it is now ranked number nine, according to data from OAG. Son Sant Joan has now regained 85% of the air traffic from 2019.

- 18 Retweeting this piece of news, Aguiló (2021) commented:

Traduït al llenguatge del segle XXI: L'Aeroport de [#Palma](https://twitter.com/hashtag/Palma?src=hashtag_click) (https://twitter.com/hashtag/Palma?src=hashtag_click) ha entrat durant l'agost en el rànquing dels 10 aeroports del món amb més contaminació. En concret, ara mateix està a la novena posició...

Translated into the language of the 21st century: this August, Palma's airport has entered the top ten [list] of the world's airports with the [highest] level of pollution. To be more concrete, it is now ranked number nine...

- 19 An issue arises here that is common to all examples discussed in this section: to understand the political relevance of this horizontal translation, it is necessary to reconstruct the implications and nuances behind it in some detail. However, it should be noted that most of these details would be familiar to the expected receivers of these translations, that is, citizens who follow regional and/or national news. In this case, the shared knowledge that enables this translation to be comprehensible to its audience consists of recent political and ecological debates in the Balearic Islands. As is well known, the archipelago—and particularly the islands of Majorca and Ibiza—have become heavily dependent on the tourism industry, which is now the main source of work and income. However, the negative consequences of this industry—including job precariousness, higher rents, and increased pressure on natural resources—have created a sense of malaise among local residents since 2015, prompting various campaigns and initiatives against its perceived excesses (Fernández, 2020b, pp. 97–101). Two opposing ideological narratives are therefore articulated in this interaction: while the institutional media outlet weaves a narrative of economic growth and recovery, especially important after the enormous impact of the COVID pandemic on the tourism industry, Aguiló outlines an alternative narrative that emphasizes the dark side of the industry. The concept of translation is mobilized to make this tension between conflicting narratives more visible and cast doubt on the legitimacy of the dominant narrative. In particular, Aguiló's claim to be translating into “the language of the 21st century” serves to highlight the evolution of political debates within the Balearic society and stresses that awareness of climate change is part and parcel of a more contemporary sensibility.

- 20 A second type of horizontal translation involves a more pronounced shift away from the surface of the message; although it might still be possible to identify those elements the translator has chosen to enhance, his or her interpretation largely disregards the semantics of the original text. One example is the intervention below by Yago Álvarez, a left-wing journalist specializing in economics. Known in left-wing circles as the “Furious economist” (Economista cabreado), Álvarez aims to enhance popular knowledge on economics. His Twitter profile offers the following advice to readers: “Learn about economics so that no economist can fuck you up” (Aprende economía para que no te joda un economista). In the example below (Álvarez, 2021)⁹, he tweets and comments on a piece of news published under the title “Deliveroo is planning to cease its business operations in Spain” (Deliveroo planea el cese, 2021) as follows:

Traduzco: Deliveroo reconoce que sin explotar a los falsos autónomos su modelo de negocio nunca será rentable.

I translate: Deliveroo admits that its business model will never be profitable without exploiting false self-employed workers.

- 21 Once again, familiarity with Spanish political and economic debates is essential to understanding the relevance of this horizontal translation. The British food delivery company Deliveroo is a good example of platform capitalism (Srnicsek, 2016), a growing business model that relies on the activity of people who are not employed by a certain platform, app, or site, but nevertheless generate benefit for it. In the specific case of food delivery companies such as Deliveroo, workers are expected to be self-employed, and thus pay for their national insurance themselves, even though they are assessed and controlled by the company. Taking advantage of a legal loophole, many companies have favored this type of work model, which allows them to save money at the expense of workers’ rights. However, in 2021, the Spanish Supreme Court ruled twice against Deliveroo (Olías, 2021), arguing that the people employed by the app were “false self-employed workers” (falsos autónomos), that is, they were treated as self-employed when they were not so in practice. Deliveroo was ordered to hire them and pay their insurance and taxes as appropriate.

- 22 Álvarez's horizontal translation is addressed to media users who are familiar with this context but might not have an in-depth understanding of its complexities. Against the apparently neutral statement made by the company, which merely claims that "the level of investment required to be competitive is very high" (requeriría un nivel de inversión 'muy elevado') (Deliveroo planea el cese, 2021), the journalist-translator places emphasis on the dubious legality that had allowed the company to benefit from the original work model. This translational practice therefore highlights another clash of narratives: while Deliveroo situates its decision within a standard economic narrative in which only benefits and risks are considered, Álvarez casts it within a more politically-oriented narrative that foregrounds worker resistance to the abuses of big business.
- 23 This second form of horizontal translation in fact seems particularly common in the field of labor and economics. In particular, the wealth of neologisms generated by companies, think-tanks, and economic gurus to make neoliberal policies more palatable has come to provide a productive area for this form of engagement. A good example is the coinage *trabacaciones*—a portmanteau of *trabajo* ("work") and *vacaciones* ("holidays") which is used to translate the English neologism *workcation*. Many Twitter users reacted critically to this coinage, with one tweeting under the pseudonym Jorge(r) (2018) claiming that it should be translated as "exploitation of labor" (explotación laboral). Horizontal translation of this type does not only attempt to expose an undeclared hidden message as in the case of the Deliveroo announcement, but also to undermine the neoliberal allure of some concepts such as *workcation* and *trabacaciones*, with their promise of combining work and pleasure, and present them instead in a crude and negative light through translation.
- 24 The third and more striking form of horizontal translation is parodic in character and emphasizes open ideological disagreement. Here, source and target text bear almost no semantic relationship to each other. The translator does not set out to expose a specific hidden 'truth', but rather to expose a speaker's or writer's political bias in a mocking manner. An example of this type of horizontal translation comes from commentary on a press conference given in late 2022 by Isabel Díaz Ayuso, conservative president of the Madrid region. Díaz Ayuso had criticized a massive demonstration that had taken place in

Madrid in support of the public health system, with approximately 500,000 protesters being involved. On its Twitter account, newspaper *El País* featured the following quote from Díaz Ayuso's statement:

Ayuso: "La manifestación de ayer no fue en defensa de la sanidad pública, sino para buscar un nuevo liderazgo de ultraizquierda en Madrid. De lo contrario, hubieran acudido dos millones de madrileños. Esto fue otra cosa". (*El País*, 2022)

Ayuso: Yesterday's demonstration was not in support of the public health system; instead, its aim was to establish a new leadership of the radical left in Madrid. Had this not been the case, two million Madrid citizens would have attended. This was something else.

- 25 Someone retweeting this piece of news under the pseudonym Solo un tweet mas (2022) commented as follows: "I translate: I don't give a damn if you die, how could I not give a damn if you demonstrate" (Traduzco: me la suda si te mueres, como no me la va a sudar que te manifiestes). As in the previous examples, familiarity with the Spanish political context is a prerequisite to understanding the critical weight of this horizontal translation. During the different stages of the COVID pandemic, Díaz Ayuso was heavily criticized for committing a series of grave mistakes and introducing various controversial measures (Plaza Casares, 2021), including the prohibition on admitting certain groups of elderly people such as the disabled and those suffering cognitive impairment to hospital, providing insufficient funding to public centres, and offering incentives to bars and restaurants to revive the economy despite continued high levels of contagion. The claim that Díaz Ayuso does "not give a damn" about people dying must be understood against this background and wider polemic. Interestingly, the translation here once again challenges the official narrative, but it does not offer a clear counternarrative as in the earlier examples. Whereas Díaz Ayuso articulates a clear narrative of mistrust, casting doubt on the purpose and nature of the demonstration (it is not about public health, but a maneuver of the radical left), the retweeter's horizontal translation attempts to undermine the credibility of the speaker without articulating an alternative narrative to hers.

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- 26 Extended conceptualizations of translation such as those discussed in this article are highly relevant to understanding the intellectual and political climate in which traditional politics has come under heavy criticism in recent years. They are also particularly illuminating in relation to an issue that the 15M movement brought to the fore: the growing rejection of the system of expertise upon which contemporary democracies are based. This is a key point where epistemology and politics interact, as decision-making fundamentally depends on knowledge: how it is defined, who has legitimate access to it, and how the power that derives from it is stratified. At the same time, the nature of the interaction between epistemology and politics is itself embedded in a variety of conflicting narratives about the social world and is hence subject to constant re-evaluation by different individuals and groups.
- 27 As I have argued in this article and elsewhere (Fernández, 2018; 2020a), hierarchical translation depends on a conception of politics which privileges intellectuals and (leftist) politicians as those with the responsibility and requisite skill to translate political reality for the benefit of the common people. Given their special ability to decipher political language, they are also assumed to be in a position to represent other citizens who lack this knowledge and training in political debates. In this sense, hierarchical translation fails to challenge the system of expertise that has dominated modern democracies; it only offers an improved version of it, as the new experts—such as representatives of Podemos and similar parties—are themselves committed to transforming society, with the support of better-informed citizens. The foregrounding of intellectuals and other experts in the discourse of the post-15M left reflects these intellectuals' own cultural bias to a large extent. The majority of Podemos's cadres, as well as some of their allies, come from a privileged cultural and educational background (Fernández, 2018; 2020b). Many were either established or aspiring academics with experience at various universities and think-tanks. This is not necessarily a drawback, especially given that the core of 15M protesters also possessed a high

level of educational capital (Della Porta, 2015, pp. 51–52). Nevertheless, the ‘excess of theory’ (Villacañas, 2018) that has characterized Iglesias’ and his colleagues’ political discourse has attracted much criticism, mainly because it has been seen as responsible for their failure to extend their message to other social groups in the long run (Hernández, 2018).

- 28 By contrast, the practice of horizontal translation is more consistent with an important strand of thought within the 15M that developed a strong critique of the system of expertise, favoring a non-hierarchical and collective understanding of knowledge. As an anonymous author claimed in the early days of the movement (Anónimo, 2012, pp. 42–45), the 15M was characterized by a deliberate dilution of the figure of the intellectual: although assemblies were rich in intellectual exchanges and did not shy away from addressing complex issues, their dynamics were based on principles of rotation, horizontality, and collectivity, deliberately preventing the emergence of individual leaders or spokespeople. In opposition to the image of a mass of citizens who needed to be provided with appropriate language and concepts to be able to engage politically, because those citizens were assumed to be unable to generate their own language and concepts, radically democratic strands within the 15M claimed that “non-experts” can also “trust in their own abilities to collaboratively construct the knowledge they need in any given situation and to generate effective answers to the problems that confront them” (Moreno Caballud, 2015, p. 3). While horizontal translation often incorporates elements of specialized knowledge, it adopts a more democratic approach to knowledge: here, there is no prerequisite for the use of public speech, and no one is authorized to speak in the name of the collective.
- 29 These conflicting understandings of knowledge and expertise generate their own narratives, which recall those mobilized in the Naumann vs. Babels controversy analyzed by Boéri (2008). In 2005, Peter Naumann, a professional German interpreter who had provided paid conference interpreting at a number of World Social Forum events, criticized Babels, an activist collective of interpreters who offered volunteer interpreting for the Forum, for the quality of interpretation services it provided at the Porto Alegre summit, dismissing its members as unprofessional and “cognitively challenged” (Boéri,

2008, p. 37). In analyzing this conflict of narratives, Boéri (2008) argued that each position was shaped by different understandings of commitment and interpreting: while Babels spoke of “[c]ommitment to participation and horizontality”, Naumann prioritized “commitment to expertise and rationality” (p. 43). The former promotes a vision of “a horizontal world” where interpreting is understood as “the product of the collective participation of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds”, while the latter is embedded in a vision of “an expertise-based hierarchical world” in which “conference interpreters are portrayed as an elite of gifted individuals” (2008, p. 44). The conflicting narratives of translation discussed here in the context of the 15M movement likewise reveal very different conceptions of politics, as noted earlier. While Podemos’s cadres believe in a meritocracy of knowledge, where intellectuals occupy the position of indispensable leaders and mediators, the 15M climate strives to create a more egalitarian space, where knowledge is not understood as a predefined entity possessed by the few but rather as a dynamic social construct that is constantly being revisited and reshaped by all members of a society. This continuity and overlap among debates in different contexts at different points of time is far from coincidental. As Wolfson and Funke (2016) explain, the global justice movement of the early 2000s and the movement of the squares which started in 2010 can be understood as two “waves” of the same “epoch of contention” against the consequences of globalization (p. 62). Specifically, some of the internal contradictions and conflicts characterizing these two epochs, including conflictual approaches to the role of knowledge and expertise, are shared and ongoing.

- 30 Despite the many differences between the two political cultures discussed here, the way forward for a truly transformative politics might not lie in opposition, but rather in the reconciliation of these divergent understandings of expertise and translation. In his defense of democracy as an “anti-oligarchic principle”, philosopher and activist José Luis Moreno Pestaña (2019, pp. 284–286) has rightly argued that democratic communities cannot manage without specialists in various fields: the complexities of modern societies often surpass the capacity of individual citizens. Moreno Pestaña’s point is that communities should reclaim the right to decide which problems they need to consult experts on, and how these experts

might be recruited. Far too frequently, as we know, a specialist or an academic becomes the self-appointed spokesperson for a community because their intellectual and cultural capital gives them an advantage over those who lack it. The hierarchical understanding of translation discussed in this article is certainly one example of this scenario. Departing from this model, the practice of horizontal translation could constitute the germ for an alternative to the hierarchical notion of expertise. Horizontal translation can be strengthened by radicalizing some of the principles it embraces, especially openness to other potential translations and reluctance to speak on behalf of others. At the same time, it can also address some of its weaknesses, such as the relative lack of connection between translator and community. In the examples discussed here, horizontal translators seem to work without a project for the collectivity; while they produce their translations for their potential receivers, it is unclear to what extent they engage with the specific needs of any given collective.

- 31 A compromise between the two concepts of translation could be achieved by political communities appointing their own ‘political translators’, in the sense proposed by Nicole Doerr (2018, pp. 4–5). Instead of using their knowledge to affirm and reaffirm their own positions, as hierarchical translators do, these political translators—always subject to rotation, accountability and potential deselection—would use it to minimize social inequalities by encouraging every member of the community to exercise their right to speak and accept their responsibility to translate; in other words, to become horizontal translators.

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NOTES

- 1 Sadler et al. (2023) is a very recent and relevant exception, establishing a three-way exchange between politics, translation studies, and knowledge translation.
- 2 See Fernández (2020a) for an extended treatment of some of these issues.
- 3 All translations from Spanish and Catalan quoted in this article are my own, unless otherwise noted in the bibliography.
- 4 Despite lexical similarities and research affinities, my overall approach is different yet complementary to Doerr's, as she focuses on the advocacy role played by political translators on behalf of disadvantaged groups while I pay more attention to the specific task of denunciation that these individuals perform.
- 5 See Fernandez (2020a, p. 107–128) for further discussion.
- 6 “he strives for translating supposedly complex matters into a more accessible language” (se empeña en traducir lo supuestamente complejo a un lenguaje más accessible).
- 7 In fact, when I asked him directly about this question during a personal interview (15 March 2016), Germán Cano expressed little confidence in the translatorial potential of average citizens.
- 8 Twitter was rebranded as X by its new owner in July 2023; since my examples were collected prior to this change, I will retain the earlier name for the social network throughout.
- 9 <https://x.com/econocabreado?lang=ca>

ABSTRACTS

English

The political and cultural atmosphere that emerged in Spain after the 15M movement was decisively shaped by translation practices, as evident in the high number of translations released by politically committed publishers, the visibility and status of translated intellectuals—such as Silvia Federici and David Harvey—, and the adoption of political concepts such as *comunes* and *cuidados* that have been shaped through complex processes of translation. Translation has also been used as a political concept by left-wing activists and political representatives, notably Podemos and other political groups. In this context, this article distinguishes between acts of *hierarchical* and *horizontal* political translation. Both proceed from a similar point of departure: the language of mainstream politics and the language of the majority of society are so profoundly disconnected that any meaningful interaction between them has to rely on practices of translation. Each of these practices involves a very different conception of politics, particularly at an epistemological level: while hierarchical translation deploys a more refined version of the traditional model of expertise, horizontal translation seems to favor a more egalitarian understanding of knowledge.

A synopsis of this article can be found [here](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.482) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.482>).

العربية

تشكّلت الأجواء السياسية والثقافية التي ظهرت في إسبانيا عقب تأسيس حركة إم-15 تشكلاً حاسماً من خلال ممارسات الترجمة، ويتجلى هذا في الترجمات الهائلة التي أصدرها الناشرون من أصحاب المواقف السياسية المعلنة آنذاك، فضلاً عن مكانة المثقفين الذين تُرجمت أعمالهم مثل سيلفيا فيديريشي وديفيد هارفي، ودخول مفاهيم سياسية إلى الثقافة عبر عمليات ترجمة معقدة مثل مفهومي "*comunes*" و "*cuidados*". كما استخدم الناشطون والسياسيون اليساريون الترجمة كمفهوم سياسي، كحزب بوديموس الإسباني اليساري وغيرها من الجماعات السياسية. وضمن هذا السياق يتناول هذا المقال أعمال الترجمة السياسية الهرمية والأفقية والفرق بينهما. فكلاهما ينطلق من مبدأ واحد مفاده أن لغة السياسة السائدة ولغة أغلبية المجتمع منفصلتان عن بعضهما البعض انفصلاً كبيراً؛ لدرجة أن التواصل بين هاتين اللغتين يعتمد على ممارسات ترجمة صرفة، وتتضمن كل من هذه الممارسات مفهوماً مختلفاً تماماً للسياسة، لا سيما على المستوى الإستمولوجي، ففي حين تتبع الترجمة الهرمية نسخة مقننة من النموذج التقليدي للمعرفة المتخصصة، يبدو أن الترجمة الأفقية تتبع فهماً أكثر مساواة للمعرفة.

بإمكانكم الاطلاع على ملخص المقالات عبر هذا الرابط (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.703>).

Català

Vàries pràctiques de traducció van configurar de manera decisiva l'ambient polític i cultural que va sorgir a Espanya després del moviment del 15M. Això es fa evident en l'elevat nombre de traduccions publicades per editorials políticament compromeses, en la visibilitat i l'estatus dels intel·lectuals traduïts, com Silvia Federici i David Harvey, i en l'adopció de conceptes polítics com el de *comunes* i el de *cuidados*, que s'han anat desenvolupant a través de processos complexos de traducció. Activistes d'esquerra i representants polítics també han utilitzat la traducció com a concepte polític, en especial Podemos, així com altres grups polítics. En aquest context, aquest article fa una distinció entre les pràctiques de traducció política jeràrquica i horitzontal. Totes dues parteixen d'un punt de partida similar: la llengua de la política dominant i la llengua de la majoria de la societat estan tan profundament desconnectades que qualsevol interacció significativa entre elles ha de basar-se en pràctiques de traducció. Cadascuna d'aquestes pràctiques implica una concepció de la política molt diferent, especialment a nivell epistemològic: mentre la traducció jeràrquica presenta una versió més elaborada del model d'expertesa tradicional, la traducció horitzontal sembla afavorir una comprensió més igualitària del coneixement.

La sinopsi d'aquest article es pot trobar [aquí](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.596) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.596>).

Español

Las prácticas traductorales fueron determinantes para dar forma al clima político y cultural que surgió en España tras el movimiento 15M, como lo demuestra el elevado número de traducciones publicadas por editoriales comprometidas políticamente, la visibilidad y el estatus de intelectuales traducidos —como Silvia Federici y David Harvey— y la adopción de conceptos políticos como *comunes* y *cuidados*, que se han ido configurando a través de complejos procesos de traducción. La traducción también ha sido utilizada como concepto político por activistas y representantes políticos de la izquierda, en particular de Podemos y otros grupos políticos afines. En este contexto, este artículo distingue entre actos de traducción política *jerárquica* y *horizontal*. Ambos toman un punto de partida similar: el lenguaje de la política dominante y el lenguaje de la mayoría de la sociedad están tan profundamente desconectados que cualquier interacción significativa entre ellos depende de prácticas traductorales. Cada una de estas prácticas implica una concepción muy diferente de la política, en particular a nivel epistemológico: mientras que la traducción jerárquica despliega una versión más refinada del modelo tradicional del «expertismo», la traducción horizontal parece favorecer una comprensión más igualitaria del conocimiento.

Se puede encontrar una sinopsis de este artículo [aquí](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.594) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.594>).

Magyar

A 15M-mozgalmat követő spanyol politikai és kulturális közhangulatot döntően meghatározták a fordítási gyakorlatok, amely érzékelhető a politikailag elkötelezett kiadók által közreadott nagyszámú fordításban, az olyan lefordított értelmiségiek láthatóságában és státuszában, mint Silvia Federici és David Harvey, valamint olyan politikai kulcsfogalmak átvételében, mint a községek (*comunes*) és a közgondoskodás (*cuidados*), amelyek a fordítás összetett folyamatai során formálódtak. A fordítást továbbá baloldali aktivisták és politikai képviselők, mint például a Podemos vagy egyéb politikai csoportok, politikai fogalomként is használni kezdték. Jelen tanulmány eme kontextusban úgynevezett *hierarchikus* és *horizontális* politikai fordítási tetteket különböztet meg. Mindkét kifejezésnek hasonló a kiindulópontja: még hozzá az, hogy a mainstream politika és a társadalom többségének nyelve annyira mélyen szétkapcsolódott, hogy a köztük lévő bármilyen értelmes interakciót fordítási gyakorlatokra kell alapozni. Minden ilyen gyakorlat a politika nagyon eltérő megfogalmazásait hordozza magában, különösen egy epistemológiai szinten: amíg a hierarchikus fordítás a hagyományos szakértelem-modell egy kifinomultabb változatát alkalmazza, addig a horizontális fordítás a tudásnak egy sokkal inkább egalitárius felfogását pártolja.

A tanulmány összefoglalója [itt](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.601) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.601>) olvasható.

Norsk

Den politiske og kulturelle atmosfæren som vokste frem i Spania etter 15M-bevegelsen ble på avgjørende vis formet av oversettelsespraksiser. Dette vises i det høye antallet oversettelser utgitt av politisk engasjerte forlag, synligheten og statusen som tilskrives oversatte intellektuelle-slik som Silvia Federici og David Harvey-, samt adopsjonen av politiske begreper-slik som *comunes* og *cuidados*-som har blitt formet gjennom komplekse oversettelsesprosesser. Oversettelse har også blitt tatt i bruk som et politisk begrep av aktivister og politiske representanter på venstresiden, spesielt Podemos og andre politiske grupper. I lys av denne konteksten skiller denne artikkelen mellom *hierarkisk* og *horisontal* politisk oversettelse. Begge starter fra et lignende utgangspunkt: språket som brukes i mainstream politikk og språket som brukes av majoriteten i samfunnet er så dypt frakoblet hverandre at enhver meningsfull interaksjon mellom dem må bero på oversettelsespraksiser. Hver av disse praksisene involverer svært ulike forestillinger om politikk, særlig på et epistemologisk nivå. Mens hierarkisk oversettelse anvender en mer raffinert versjon av den tradisjonelle ekspertise-modellen, ser horisontal oversettelse ut til å favorisere en mer egalitær forståelse av kunnskap.

Et sammendrag av artikkelen finnes [her](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.599) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.599>).

Türkçe

15M Hareketi (2011-2012 İspanya Protestoları) sonrasında İspanya’da oluşan siyasi ve kültürel atmosferin şekillenmesinde çeviri pratikleri belirgin bir rol oynamıştır. Çeşitli siyasi görüşleri benimseyen yayınevlerince yayımlanan yüksek sayıdaki çeviri eser, eserleri İspanyolcaya tercüme edilen Silvia Federici ve David Harvey gibi entelektüellerin görünürlüğü ve saygınlığındaki artış ve karmaşık çeviri süreçleri sonucunda *comunes* ve *cuidados* gibi siyasi kavramların ortaya çıkmış olması, çevirinin oynadığı bu rolü açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. Bu süreçte, sol görüşlü aktivistler ve başta Podemos olmak üzere çeşitli siyasi temsilci gruplar, çeviriyi siyasi bir kavram olarak araçsallaştırmıştır. Mevcut çalışma, bu siyasi çeviri eylemlerini *hiyerarşik* ve *yatay* olarak ikiye ayırmaktadır. Bu iki çeviri pratiği de benzer bir çıkış noktasına dayanmaktadır. Buna göre, ana akım siyasetin dili ile toplumun büyük bir kesimince kullanılan dil birbirinden o kadar keskin bir şekilde ayrılmıştır ki aralarında anlamlı bir etkileşim sağlanabilmesi ancak çeviri pratikleri aracılığıyla mümkün olabilir. Bu çeviri pratiklerinin her biri, özellikle epistemolojik düzeyde, birbirinden oldukça farklı siyasi anlayışları temel almaktadır. Hiyerarşik çeviri, geleneksel uzmanlık modelinin daha da rafine edilmiş bir hâline karşılık gelirken, yatay çeviri, bilgiye daha eşitlikçi bir yaklaşımı destekler niteliktedir.

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Anahtar kelimeler

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AUTHOR

Fruela Fernández

University of the Balearic Islands, Spain

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/185606903>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4349-6195>

ISNI : <http://www.isni.org/0000000115706530>

BNF : <https://data.bnf.fr/fr/16674286>

The translational turn in narrative medicine: A study of Margherita Guidacci's *Neurosuite*

*Le tournant traductionnel dans la médecine narrative : Une étude de
Neurosuite de Margherita Guidacci*

التحول الترجمي في الطب السردي: دراسة لمجموعة "نيوروسويت" الشعرية لمارغريتا
غويداتشي

*Der translationale Turn in der Narrativen Medizin: Eine Studie über
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*Anlâtışal Tıpta Çeviri "Dönüşü": Margherita Guidacci'nin Neurosuite'i
Üzerine Bir Çalışma*

Marta Arnaldi

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OUTLINE

The experience of the foreign: Illness and translation

Narrative medicine and/as translation

Towards a translational epistemology of health and illness: Margherita
Guidacci's *Neurosuite*

Conclusions: In praise of epistemic darkness

TEXT

*I would like to thank Mona Baker, John Ødemark and the anonymous reviewers
for their sensitive reading and helpful comments.*

Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place. (Sontag, 1992, p. 3)

- 1 Often quoted yet largely undeciphered, Susan Sontag's words reveal a new understanding of the nature and experience of illness.¹ A fundamentally alienating condition, one that turns us into "strangers to ourselves" (Kristeva, 1991, p. 1), illness presents us with the foreign and the unfamiliar. In an attempt to cope with the feelings of exile and incomprehensibility elicited by this experience, we try to process it into something intelligible and tellable, that is, into discourse. This is why as patients we become foreign speakers of our own mother tongues, resisting standard language, and resorting to figurative speech, as disease confronts us with the challenges of inexpressibility (Scarry, 1985, p. 4).
- 2 Narrative medicine, an intellectual and clinical discipline systematized by physician and literary scholar Rita Charon in the early twenty-first century, has foregrounded the essentially narrative nature of the patient-provider encounter. Drawing on "a confluence of narrative studies and clinical practices", this discipline aims to "fortify healthcare with the capacity to skillfully receive the accounts persons give of themselves—to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by the stories of others" (Charon et al., 2016, p. 1).² Even though translation is evoked both subtly and overtly in the two seminal volumes that mapped the field (Charon, 2006; Charon et al., 2016), insights from translation studies have been excluded altogether from this discipline's theoretical and practical foundations. Similarly, recent developments in narrative medicine have emphasized the relevance of, and role played by, patients' and providers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the provision of narrative care (Marini, 2019; Ritivoi, 2023). Yet, despite these important developments, a systematic appraisal of translation as a fundamental principle of narrative medicine remains overdue.
- 3 This essay aims to invoke a translational turn in narrative medicine. My argument is grounded in two primary considerations: first, that illness is a fundamentally estranging experience resembling that of

speaking a foreign language, and second, that discourses of and around health and disease have been dominated by narrative paradigms that have failed to capture the essentially translational (as in foreign and foreignizing) speech, or lack thereof, of those who suffer. Hence the need to turn to translation in order to better comprehend the alienating dimensions of illness. These estranging aspects become apparent not just in our difficulty, at times incapacity, to articulate suffering, describe our symptoms, and make sense of what is happening to and in our bodies and minds in the face of disease. A sense of alienation also surfaces in our interactions with health providers whenever the technical languages of medicine prove to be incomprehensible to us (Arnaldi, 2022a, p. 301).³ As a result, patients' words are not simply texts, as narrative medicine posits. Crucially, they are *foreign* texts that can at times elicit, call for, and/or resist translation. My argument challenges the master plot of illness as narrative in favour of a disruptive idea of illness as translation as I contend here.

- 4 To support my hypothesis, I proceed as follows. First, I make a case for reimagining narrative medicine as translation by developing the idea that illness is essentially foreignizing. I then outline and discuss the features of narrative medicine's translational design by analyzing an exemplary case of translational epistemology of health and disease *avant la lettre*: Margherita Guidacci's *Neurosuite* (1999a). This is a collection of 80 poems recounting the poet-patient's experience of incarceration in a psychiatric hospital, patterns of (un)communication with health providers, as well as the obscured, opaque forms of psychiatric knowledge brought about by suffering.
- 5 Poetry is indeed a privileged site for exploring the connection between illness and translation precisely because of its non-narrative and metaphorical use of language, as well as for its capacity to exploit ambiguity as a source of knowledge.⁴ In its deviation from standard linguistic and narrative codes, poetry inherently acts as foreignizing discourse. This understanding of poetry as alternative discourse is reminiscent of Julia Kristeva's (1984) distinction, or rather tension, between the semiotic and symbolic order (p. 22). The semiotic is associated with a preverbal or a verbal dimension (e.g., rhythms, tones, and metaphors), thus reflecting a lyrical and narrative-resistant mode of communication which for Kristeva corresponds to

the feminine. Conversely, the symbolic associates with structured language and referential meaning, i.e., with syntax and grammar. From this perspective, poetry (the semiotic) and narrative (the symbolic) are different forms of storytelling as well as distinct genres. Indeed, there can be prose texts that challenge syntactical and grammatical rules, thereby adopting a poetic style that makes them lyrical. And vice versa, narrative poetry can make little if no use of metaphors, rhythm and metre, thus reflecting standard codes of expression. In this essay, I refer to poetry not simply as a genre but as a storytelling mode that allows us to better attend to the narrative-resistant discourse of those who suffer. Concepts from translation studies will help us decipher the opaque and meaning-resistant zones inherent in this form of communication.

- 6 Written by a woman in a non-anglophone language (Italian) and context (twentieth-century Italy), *Neurosuite* will shed light on the peripheries of narrative medicine, a discipline that, in addition to being dominated by a narratological reasoning that neglects “other modes of reflecting upon and representing experience” (Woods, 2011, p. 202), has remained largely Anglocentric (Wilson, 2023; Arnaldi & Forsdick, 2023). Analyzing these poems through the lens of translation studies will enable me to connect the poet-patient’s experience of illness with ideas of foreignization, against the triply non-normative background of Guidacci’s non-English, non-narrative, woman’s perspective. The chosen psychiatric context thus highlights a further element of marginalization and estrangement (Yakeley et al., 2014; Arnaldi, 2024). Additionally, it provides an ideal setting for discussing dynamics of narrativization, and lack thereof, in that consultation—a narrative-based process by definition—lies at the heart of psychiatric diagnosis and treatment.⁵

The experience of the foreign: Illness and translation⁶

- 7 The experience of illness encompasses several encounters with the foreign which, I argue, call for critical engagement with translation. Among these foreign encounters are the patient’s involvement with the alien and incomprehensible presence of the disease, the struggle

to express such experience and symptoms verbally, and the unfamiliar language of medicine.

- 8 I use the concept of translation as a philosophy and an epistemology that enables us to better understand, express, and communicate (with) the foreign, rather than as a linguistic operation. This capacious vision of translation applies not just to logical and/or verbal communication but also to bodily language(s), omissions, silences, images, intuitions, perceptions, and glimpses; in other words, to the array of ‘languages’ verbalized or not verbalized by the diseased body. This implies that the diseased body communicates or expresses itself in various ways, some of which might not be verbal or traditionally recognized as language (as noted earlier, Kristeva defined them as “semiotic”).⁷ This multimedia, corporeal, and Other-oriented understanding of translation does not downplay but rather enlarges common definitions of translation as the semantic transfer between a word/concept in language A to a word/concept in language B. It is grounded in a solid historical tradition within translation studies and translation theory, one that started with the German Romantics (especially Friedrich Schleiermacher) and was further developed in the twentieth century by Walter Benjamin, George Steiner, and Lawrence Venuti, among others. This tradition, which foregrounded the idea that translation is a way of thinking about alterity as well as an instrument for communicating (with) it, is still relevant today, as demonstrated by its ecocritical and biosemiotic applications in contexts of human and non-human interaction (Cronin, 2017; Marais, 2019). For example, in addressing questions of animal communication, Michael Cronin (2017) highlights the essential role that translation can play as a fundamental framework for comprehending what other sentient beings express, thus pointing to novel, translational approaches to the science of animal communication (p. 71).

- 9 A historical discussion of the link between translation and alterity exceeds the scope of this essay.⁸ Here my aim is to pinpoint the key arguments that emerge from this line of enquiry and can help us consider illness and translation as comparable discourses on the basis of their engagement with the Other.⁹ The first is the idea that translation is the mode of alterity, one that, according to Walter Benjamin (1968), manifests itself not just in literal and/or unidiomatic renditions of an original text—“the interlingual version of the Scrip-

tures [being] the prototype or ideal of all translation” (p. 81)—but also in a shift of focus from the familiar to the foreign, and from the target culture and its readers to the source and/or erased text. In contexts of healthcare, this shift is palpable on two levels: on the one hand, patients lose their sense of connection and familiarity with their own body and mind, thus feeling estranged; and, on the other hand, the providers strive to perform patient-centred acts of care. In this case, patients’ experience and speech can be seen as the original text whose features and authenticity should not get lost in translation. As we shall see, Guidacci’s poems document both of these aspects while also engaging with spiritual themes in ways that resonate with Benjamin’s mystical and metaphysical interpretation of translation.¹⁰

- 10 The second argument I would like to highlight concerns George Steiner’s idea that translation is the mode of human communication, even when it is intralingual or monoglot (Arnaldi, 2022b, p. 6). In *After Babel* (1998), first published in 1975, Steiner postulates that

Translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in *every* act of communication, in the emission and reception of each and every mode of meaning, be it in the widest semiotic sense or in more specifically verbal exchanges. To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate. (p. xii)

- 11 This statement invites us to rethink what constitutes communication, meaning-making, and perhaps even language. In the consultation room, patients and providers may find communication a challenge; even when they share a common language, a linguistic and cultural gap between them often arises—for example, when the specialist’s jargon remains incomprehensible to the patient. This difficulty is particularly problematic in psychiatry since, in this clinical context, “language” can be a resource for treatment as well as a source of affliction (Tay, 2019, p. 1). As we shall see, Guidacci’s poems offer compelling examples of what we might call “the foreign language of medicine” even when uttered in monolingual settings which do not require interlingual translation.
- 12 The third and final argument relating to translation encapsulates the previous two. Lawrence Venuti defined as foreignization the strategy in which the uncanny and often disturbing existence of the Other is

not lost, manipulated, and/or effaced in the transmission of texts, concepts, and/or experiences; domestication, the opposite of foreignization, refers to a type of translational vision and practice in which the original, foreign elements are concealed and/or eradicated in order to create a familiar experience for target audiences (Venuti, 1995; 1998). Venuti (1995) argues in favour of foreignization as a stronghold against “the violent, ethnocentric risks” of domesticising, especially in postcolonial settings (p. 20). He observes that “foreignizing translation is a dissident cultural practice, maintaining a refusal of the dominant by developing affiliations with marginal linguistic and cultural values in the receiving situation” (Venuti, 1995, p. 125), including those values that, emerging in the midst of suffering, are created in contexts of healthcare. By enabling and heralding “difference” (Derrida, 1982), foreignizing translation can be an ethical act that preserves the plurality of languages and cultures in which we are immersed. By extension, Venuti’s vision further asserts the superlinguistic and Other-oriented nature of translation to suggest ways in which we can better attend to the marginalized voices of patients by complementing, rather than discarding, the specialist knowledge of providers. As Guidacci’s poems will reveal, patients’ lived experience offers alternative epistemologies—grounded in self-perception, intuition, and/or doubt—that, thanks to the significance of their subjective dimension, have much to contribute to the science of psychiatry. In this sense, concepts such as foreignization can be borrowed from translation studies to help advocate for a deeper involvement and consideration of patients’ voices, thus resisting forms of epistemic injustice (Kious et al., 2023; Drozdowicz, 2021).¹¹ Even though the provider’s and the patient’s goal is to suppress symptoms, this does not implicate the eradication and/or domestication of the patient’s (original) discourse, or lack thereof. In fact, the patient’s and provider’s joint efforts aim at a serious consideration and evaluation of it. Patient text (words, images, non-verbal cues and their absence) is what enables treatment, especially in psychiatry. From this angle, it is always more than a description of signs.¹²

13 I now turn to putting into practice the concept of the foreignness of illness by critically engaging with, and potentially reimagining, the disciplinary and methodological foundations of narrative medicine.

What happens if we introduce values from translation studies when attending to, talking with, and learning from those who suffer?

Narrative medicine and/as translation

- 14 If illness, like translation, can be conceptualized as a foreignizing experience, then perspectives and tools from translation studies are arguably as well suited to the investigation of the expressive self (as Other) as perspectives drawn from narrative theory and narratology. This can be demonstrated in two main ways: by analyzing tropes of translation evoked in Charon's and colleagues' discussion of narrative medicine, and by reimagining narrative medicine's principles in a translational fashion.
- 15 The writings of Charon and her colleagues are punctuated with images of translation, which are used to evoke patient-provider dialogue, collaborative healthcare, and patients' speech figuratively. Yet, the essential contribution of translation as a strategic concept and practice to improving accuracy and justice within healthcare goes unmentioned, as if translation were just a metaphor and not a coherent vision. As my examination of Guidacci's poems illustrates, foreignizing approaches from translation studies can prompt us to reconsider the provider-patient power structure. Such perspectives highlight the dangers of a 'colonialist' healthcare model, where the provider's gaze dominates in a similar manner to the colonizer's while the patient remains subjugated like a colonized subject. What is important to achieve, instead, is not for a nurse or a doctor to 'read' us, a process that suggests domination, but for us—the patients—to translate and co-author with them the story of our recovery.
- 16 For example, Charon and her colleagues (2016) describe the health professional as an interpreter and translator of patients' 'foreign' speech. Thus,

It is as if I somehow become an interpreter between the patient's body and self, those two entities that, *in times of illness*, cannot on their own communicate. They speak different languages. [...] I see now [...] that when I translate between the patient's 'self' and 'body' I

might function as an intermediary between them. (p. 279; emphasis in original)

17 Similarly,

If the professional listens [...] for what the person says and also what the body says, he or she has the rare opportunity not only to hear the body out but also to translate the body's news to the person who lives in it. (Charon, 2006, p. 99)

18 It is certainly true that the clinician mediates between the patient's self and body, but a vision that does not bring to the fore the patient's labour as translator of their own foreign tongues as well as of the different languages spoken by nurses, social workers, researchers, friends, family, and policy makers fails to capture the full picture. I would argue that this vision still privileges the knowledge and authority of the health provider over those of patients. By foregrounding the voices of the "translated" (Venuti, 1995), the concept of foreignizing translation can contribute to a more just and democratic epistemology of/in healthcare.

19 That Charon and her colleagues emphasize the provider's perspective over the lived experience of patients (despite taking the latter as a point of departure) is also manifest in the prominence given to the medical profession. For example, Charon and colleagues present a compelling piece of student writing, drafted during a student's Medicine rotation. Here, an argument for foreignizing translation can be convincingly made in view of the student's portrayal of the physician as a "traveller" and the patient as a "refugee of sorts" (Charon et al., 2017, p. 250). Despite being united by the shared condition of being a foreigner, providers are positioned at the top of the hierarchy in that, being defined as travellers rather than exiles, they can return to a safe homeland—an opportunity not afforded to the refugee-patient. An excerpt of this student's piece of writing discloses the provider's dominant gaze over the patient-refugee:

My experience on the wards could be best described as a sort of cultural immersion. Like any traveller in a foreign land, I've felt an ever-present tension between the excitement of taking part in new experiences and the fear of revealing my otherness. [Also,] it is

important to appreciate the patient's status as a refugee of sorts, who finds himself in a foreign land with concerns far more pressing than assimilation. Perhaps greater efforts to actively inform patients of the physician's role [...] would help alleviate the consequences of this cross-cultural misunderstanding. (Charon et al., 2016, p. 250)

- 20 As evident in this passage, the student describes the linguistic and cultural divide between clinicians and patients as insurmountable.¹³ This disconnect arises from a tension: on the one hand, patients feel neglected because they expect a more significant physician presence “at the[ir] bedside”; on the other hand, the physician feels “under-appreciated for his efforts away from the bedside” (Charon et al., 2016, p. 250). The student aspires “to alleviate the consequences of this cross-cultural misunderstanding” by suggesting that “greater efforts” are needed to “actively inform patients of the physician's role away from the bedside” (Charon et al., 2016, p. 250). As desirable and well-intentioned as this solution might be, it tends to serve the clinician's needs more than the patient's. Even though narrative medicine has raised awareness of the challenges and unhealthy work patterns of professionals in important ways, a more equitable interpretation of patient-provider expectations is required. By illuminating margins, the concept of foreignizing translation can support advocacy for justice by erasing hierarchies of power between doctors and patients, thus fostering patient-centred dialogue and interventions.
- 21 Overall, rich in translational imagery—from the clinician's “cultural immersion” into the patient's “foreign land” to “the fear of revealing [his] own otherness”—the student's passage demonstrates that the concept of translation is indeed central to Charon and colleagues' idea of narrative medicine. Yet, it remains a *leitmotif* or a trope that is not developed into a coherent vision.
- 22 Shifting the focus from themes and language to theory, similar issues can be raised in relation to narrative medicine's foundational principles, also called the “five narrative features of medicine” (Charon, 2006, p. 39): temporality, singularity, causality/contingency, intersubjectivity, and ethicality. Here, even though the translational emerges as a theoretical tenet elsewhere, Charon's critical discussion omits any mention of translation or of translation studies as essential

and/or complementary contributors to the discipline's conceptual foundations.

- 23 The first pillar of narrative medicine is time, a “necessary axis” in “diagnosis, prevention, palliation, or cure” (Charon, 2006, p. 44). According to Charon (2006), “we need time and continuity to understand what disease afflicts a patient, to let a disease declare itself”, and also to accept the fact that we will never govern it, no matter how skilled we become (p. 44). In particular, a typical way of experiencing time in illness is “an accentuated focus on the present, amidst a shrinking away of the past and the future”, both of which become alien to us (Svenaeus, 2000, p. 399). The present is the temporal dimension of illness—that is, a time in which we experience and respond to a crisis.
- 24 Homi Bhabha’s distinction between two forms of temporality—the pedagogical and the performative—might be used to suggest that such forms also correspond to two modes of existence in and knowledge of the world (Arnaldi et al., 2022, pp. 397–398). Whereas the pedagogical form of temporality refers to “a linear, ‘continuist [and] accumulative’ concept of time”, performative temporality “relies on a temporality that is liminal, ‘repetitious [and] recursive’” (Arnaldi et al., 2022, pp. 397–398). From this perspective, if “the pedagogical-diachronic form [...] proposes a unified model of time that is heavily dependent on tradition and the past, [...] the performative-synchronic form articulates the complexities of heterogeneity, cultural difference, and fragmentation” (Arnaldi et al., 2022, pp. 397–398). Patients inhabit the performative space associated with illness, the time of crisis through which they experience a fragmentation of the self, a state of urgency, as well as the anxiety and risks brought about by a plurality of outcomes and futures, some of which can be fatal. With its focus on plurality and regeneration (in the sense that being distinct from each other, the possible translations of a text can be virtually infinite), translation offers a conception of time, present-oriented and multiple, that can help us investigate the diverse and fragmented temporalities of the self in illness.
- 25 Similarly, the categories of causality and contingency can be reimagined and enriched with notions of opacity and incommensurability drawn from translation studies. Clinical practice, Charon (2006)

points out, “is consumed with emplotment” to the point that “diagnosis itself is the effort to impose a plot onto seemingly disconnected events or states of affairs” (p. 50). The plots that “we encounter and create in medical practice”, moreover, can be “irrevocably about their endings”, that is to say that providers utilize these plots “to understand or to imagine the vectors of life, [...] the inevitability of death, and the narrative connections among us all” (Charon, 2006, p. 51). Yet, I argue, stories of health and illness are not only or not much about endings; rather, they are about processes (Gardini, 2023), and processes indicate that a form of translation is taking place (Marais, 2019, p. 5).¹⁴

- 26 An understanding of translation as process can support a vision of health and disease as unstable and evolving conditions. As Kobus Marais (2019) persuasively put it, “‘translation-ness’, or the translationality of all the ‘inter’ and ‘trans’ process-phenomena” (p. 5)—from interpretation to transcreation and from intermediality to transformation—reveals the stages through which meaning is transformed into form and/or things, thus illuminating the processual nature of meaning making, which is essential, and often lost, in sickness.
- 27 Finally, as determinants of narrative medicine, singularity, and intersubjectivity can also be examined through a translational lens. Charon (2006) defines singularity as what “distinguishes narrative knowledge from universal or scientific knowledge”, that is as the “ability to capture the singular, irrepliable, or incommensurable” (p. 45). The illness text, she explains, “remains a zone of indeterminacy, of the pleasure of the new, the never seen” (Charon, 2006, p. 45). The focus on the narrative-I and its epistemic energy is then problematized in Charon’s discussion of intersubjectivity. Charon (2006) observes that literary scholars “probe the complexity that results when one human being engages with another in transmitting and receiving texts. Like medicine, narrative situations always join one human being with another” (pp. 51–52). In the intersubjective meetings that take place between the “relative strangers” who are patients and providers, complex texts are shared and co-produced; these texts “encompass words, silences, physical findings, pictures, measurements of substances in the body, and appearances” (Charon, 2006, pp. 54–55), thus revealing the translational/transmediatic nature of these dialogues. As the “science-art of relationality and

alterity” (Arnaldi, 2022b, p. 2), translation provides tools that enable us to become “fluent in the language[s] of another”, “to give and receive simultaneously and ethically” (Charon, 2006, pp. 55, 60).

Towards a translational epistemology of health and illness: Margherita Guidacci’s *Neurosuite*

- 28 The 80 poems which constitute Margherita Guidacci’s *Neurosuite* (1999a) embody narrative medicine’s translational core on a number of levels, serving as a primary source of psychiatric knowledge. A prolific poet and translator, Guidacci is celebrated for her deeply spiritual verse as well as for her ability to master various poetic styles. Her work ranges from accessible and clear writing to cryptic lines that are reminiscent of the Italian Hermetic movement.¹⁵ Guidacci is also known for translating works from English, including John Donne’s sermons and Emily Dickinson’s poetry. Her writing is richly intertextual, incorporating references not only to authors in translation but also to key figures in Italian literature, particularly Dante.
- 29 Stemming from the mid-period of her career, *Neurosuite* explores Guidacci’s experience in a psychiatric institution, combining all of the elements discussed above, from spiritual themes to intertextuality, and from clarity of expression to laconic and mysterious lines.¹⁶ My aim here is to deepen the analysis of this poetry collection by extending its reading beyond religious themes and intertextual elements. Specifically, I will examine how translational thinking can help us better understand Guidacci’s experience and portrayal of psychiatric suffering. I will concentrate on selected excerpts from the collection, rather than on entire poems, using a thematic and argumentative approach instead of traditional textual analysis. This method will help me pinpoint clusters of translation and areas of translational epistemology as they appear throughout the collection, seeing them as part of a continuum rather than as isolated pieces.
- 30 To begin with, Guidacci’s *Neurosuite*¹⁷ deals with the ways in which illness can estrange the sufferer from themselves and others, thus

revealing its foreignizing effects. Specifically, patients may feel alienated due to experiences of terror, nightmares, and monstrous visions encountered during hospital stays or moments of crisis. In addition to their impact on patients’ sense of self, these experiences can alter their perception of society and nature (primary and atmospheric elements are often described in altered form), producing imagery that borders on the planetary and interstellar. Table 1 outlines these dimensions of alienation that are associated with illness, beginning with a general sense of estrangement, progressing through monstrous visions, and culminating in altered reality.

Table 1. The foreignizing experience of illness in Guidacci’s *Neurosuite*

Dimension of alienation	Examples	
Estrangement	Io non sono il mio corpo. Mi è straniero, nemico. Ancora peggio è l'anima, e neppure con essa m'identifico. ("Madame X", p. 190)	I am not my body. It is foreign to me, my enemy. The soul is even worse, and I cannot identify myself with it, either.
	Io restavo sotto—non vi fu alcun segno della mia presenza fuorché il segno altrui su di me. ("Una storia ingloriosa", p. 189)	I remained underneath—there was no sign of my presence apart from the sign of an other on me.
	Guardano anch'essi il loro corpo con stupore e oppressione, sentendosi straniati da quella macchia biancastra nello specchio come se fosse una forma mai vista. ("Stupore e oppressione", p. 189– 190)	They, too, look at their body with wonder and oppression, feeling estranged from that whitish spot reflected in the mirror as if it were a shape never seen.
Terror	In fondo ai loro occhi si accendono fiammelle di terrore. ("Sala d'attesa", p. 173)	At the bottom of their eyes flames of terror ignite themselves.
	Avvinghiati Minosse [il medico], cingiti con la coda. ("Accettazione", p. 174)	Twist Minos [the doctor], tie yourself with your tail.
	In un fruscio confuso si levano i nostri demoni. ("Iniezione serale", p. 174)	In a confused rustle our demons rise.

Altered reality	Neri brandelli di nubi strappate, erba dolente, frustata dal vento. ("Nero con movimento", p. 171)	Black shreds of torn clouds, Suffering grass, lashed by the wind.
	Ancor meglio essere nuvole, non legate a una forma [...] e soprattutto senza dolore dissolversi. ("Stupore e oppressione", p. 190)	Being like the clouds is even better, without being bound to a form [...] and especially without suffering dissolving.
	Il mondo è un'acqua dondolante dove calano lunghi riflessi, senza fondo. ("Insonnia", p. 196)	The world is swaying water where long reflections fall, bottomless.
	Diventeremo acqua anche noi. ("Variazioni su un tema d'acqua", p. 198)	We, too, will become water.
	Fissando il nostro pianeta lontano con il tuo rozzo telescopio. ("Al dottor Z", p. 178)	Staring at our distant planet with your rough telescope.
	[...] la Galassia dei tuoi globuli empirà mappe di consultazione. ("Un caso clinico", p. 179)	[...] the Galaxy of your cells will fill consultation maps.
	Vanno i pianeti silenziosamente lungo monotoni millenni: un giorno a un tratto si frantumano. ("Doveva esservi altro", p. 191)	Planets silently move along monotonous millennia: one day, all of a sudden, they crumble.
	Sai dirmi a che mondo appartieni? ("A che mondo", p. 202)	Can you tell me to which world you belong?

- 31 It is interesting to note how living on the “planet of illness”, or as Sontag (1992) put it, “in the kingdom of the sick” (p. 3), can flatten our experience of time: “planets silently move”, Guidacci says, “along monotonous millennia” (p. 191). As is evident in the quotes from Guidacci in Table 1, the individual’s confinement to an inescapable present, monotonous and unreal, is a fundamental characteristic of disease. In this context, notions of time such as Bhabha’s idea of temporality as repetitious and recursive can help us better capture this halting of the temporal flux.
- 32 Similarly, ideas of untranslatability prove useful when dealing with the incommunicable aspects of suffering. Patients become translators of incomprehensible tongues, in my sense of inner translation as the form of translation which occurs when the poet-patient translates the doctor’s medical jargon into a comprehensible language (Arnaldi, 2022a, p. 301). These incomprehensible tongues include the languages of medicine, which contribute to creating the “diseased communication” that takes place in the asylum (Arnaldi, 2021, p. 17). To represent physicians’ foreign discourse, Guidacci’s poems draw on

the idea of translation in various ways, as evident in the excerpts in Table 2:

Table 2. Translating the foreign language of medicine in Guidacci’s *Neurosuite*

Sono chiamati ed entrano e ricevono tutto il conforto che di là era in serbo: un nome greco per il loro male. (“Sala d’attesa”, p. 173-174)	They are called and enter and receive all the comfort that was in store for them over there: A Greek name for their illness.
Ci sezioni e ci pesi mentre i tuoi dizionari con i più dotti termini alimentano l’eloquenza ippocratica. (“Al dottor R”, p. 178)	You dissect us and weigh us while your dictionaries with their most learned terms nourish a Hippocratic eloquence.
Ci perdiamo nei tuoi simboli magici e lo stupore ce ne rivela il senso: come ci stia uccidendo il pungiglione che i tuoi diagrammi rappresentano. (“Al dottor R”, p. 178)	We lose ourselves in your magical symbols and it is wonder that reveals their meaning to us: the way in which the sting represented by your diagrams is killing us.

- 33 These passages explore the linguistic and cultural gap between patients and health providers (Kortmann, 2010, p. 203), thus calling for a translational reimagining of narrative medicine’s pillar of inter-subjectivity. Given the nature of this gap, concepts and theories from translation studies may be more effective than narrative theory when analyzing patient-provider interaction. To borrow a sentence that Donna Haraway (1988) used with reference to feminism (another form of non-normative knowledge), narrative medicine “loves [indeed] another science: the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood” (p. 589).
- 34 Because of her ‘foreign status’ as an individual and a speaker, the patient is often compared to an exile. *Neurosuite* is punctuated with images of this kind, some of which describe Guidacci’s existential struggle in terms of pilgrimage, detention, and guesthood. This emphasis on outcasts and peripheries further supports the idea that illness is fundamentally foreignizing. After an electroconvulsive therapy session, which is described as an unknown “revolution”, the poet finds herself suffering the aftermath of a “long exile” (Guidacci, 1999a, p. 198). A similar sense of frailty and wandering emerges from passages populated by images of walls, chains, and cells, often accompanied by counter-images of doors, thresholds, and vast

spaces; it is worth noting here that the word *foreign* derives from the Latin word *foris*, meaning “outside”. Table 3 features examples of the exilic imagery used by Guidacci to portray patients.

Table 3. Exilic imagery in Guidacci’s *Neurosuite*

Da che rivoluzione emergi? [...] Forse ti hanno promesso ancora gloria Di là da un lungo esilio. (“Incoronazione – Elettrochoc”, p. 198)	From which revolution are you emerging? [...] Perhaps you have been promised glory still beyond a long exile.
Questo nodo di pietra, questa città murata! La medesima ansia fa cercare una porta a chi è dentro, a chi è fuori. (“Città murata”, p. 171)	This stony knot, this walled city! The same anxiety makes those inside and those outside look for a door.
Girare sempre intorno tastando muri e sbarre [...] sognando di smisurate vastità. (“Scelte”, p. 177)	We keep going around touching walls and bars [...] dreaming of a boundless vastness.
Tu confini con l’aria [...] E sei tu stessa la tua prigioniera che cammina. (“Prigione”, p. 205)	You border with the air [...] And you yourself are your own walking prison.
[...] o pellegrino puoi domandarti tante cose ma una sola importa: è l’ultima casa dei vivi o la prima dei morti? (“Clinica neurologica”, p. 173)	[...] pilgrim you can ask many things but there is only one that matters: is this the last house of the living or the first of the dead?

35 The epistemic perspective offered by the exiled patient can be defined as translational because it originates in the experience of dwelling in an in-between zone suspended between the ill and the healthy, the dead and the living. This “transformational awareness comes from the [patient-migrant’s] ‘way of seeing’ [...], one that is blurred and fragmentary as much as it is sharp, just like the image reflected by a ‘broken mirror’, or the vision of a reversed tower of Babel” (Arnaldi, 2022c, p. 211). This broken glass, or reversed world, is not merely a mirror of nostalgia; it is in fact a useful tool with which to work in the present, rebuild it, and see it with fresh eyes. As Donna Haraway (1988) observed, the divided self is capable of questioning established positions and assuming responsibility, as well as engaging in logical discussions and imaginative explorations that transform

historical narratives; in this sense, “splitting, not being, is the privileged image for [translational] epistemologies of scientific knowledge” (p. 586).

- 36 Another translational manner in which the exilic patient gains knowledge is opacity. I borrow this term from Édouard Glissant, a Caribbean poet and philosopher of translation. In *The Poetics of Relation* (1997), Glissant claims that “opacities must be preserved” (p. 120); “opaque”, here, is not “the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such”. Rather, it is “that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence”, i.e., of relationality, translationality, and (epistemic) justice (Glissant, 1997, p. 191). He concludes by saying that “widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent of nonbarbarism. We clamor for the right to opacity for everyone” (Glissant, 1997, p. 194).¹⁸
- 37 Here I use the term “opacity” in three main ways: (i) as a synonym for splitting, fragmentation, and loss (the opaque offers but a glimpse of the whole); (ii) as a form of untranslatability and epistemic obscurity; and (iii) as a form of unknowability that, far from being reduceable to (psychiatric) ignorance, supports epistemic wonder, tension, and doubt. Table 4 provides examples from Guidacci’s poetry to demonstrate each of the inflections proposed.

Table 4. Opacity as Episteme in Guidacci’s *Neurosuite*

Type of opacity	Examples	
Fragmentation	Tu non puoi ricomporre un disegno spezzato. ("Al dottor Y", p. 179)	You cannot recompose a broken drawing.
	[...] solo un piccolo strappo che nessuno ha saputo ricucire fa intravedere la verità. ("Arance", p. 181)	[...] only a little tear that nobody was able to mend allows us to glimpse the truth.
	Il nostro crollo non finiva mai. [...] eravamo [...] l'atto stesso del crollare. ("Crollo", p. 208)	Our fall never ended. [...] we were [...] the very act of falling.

Obscurity	[Dottore,] Sei all'oscuro di tutto come noi. ("Al dottor Y", p. 179)	[Doctor,] you are in the dark about everything, just like us.
	Solo il buio è quello ch'io vedo. ("Il cerchio deserto", p. 205)	I can only see darkness.
	Tutti i vostri strumenti hanno nomi bizzarri e difficili, ma io vedo chiaro. ("Non voglio" p. 195)	All your instruments have strange names, and difficult names, but I can see clearly.
	Siamo noi i guardiani del mondo: noi che vediamo trascorrere le ombre. ("Di notte", p. 196)	We are the guardians of the world: we who see the shadows passing.
	[...] in una danza elettrica, razzi sfrenati [vanno] nell'interna tenebra. ("Incoronazione – Elettrochoc", p. 198)	[...] in an electric dance, uncontrolled rockets [move] in the internal darkness.
	Almeno sia la notte di mia scelta! ("Accorgimenti contro la notte", p. 197)	May at least night be chosen!
Unknowability	M'impastano le dita della notte [...] segno che tu non conosci e neppur io conosco ("Il segno", p. 186)	The fingers of the night knead me [...] A sign of the fact that you do not know and that I do not know, either.
	Ma tu non sentisti la morte [...] E dunque cosa conosci? ("Atlante", p. 184)	But you did not feel death [...] Therefore what can you know?
	Sconfitto è il <i>gnothi seautón</i> [...] Tagliati fuori dalla conoscenza solo dell'ignoranza ormai cerchiamo la chiave.	The 'know thyself' has been defeated [...] Cut out of knowledge we can only look for the key of ignorance.
	Il mondo è divenuto così opaco o siamo noi che non abbiamo più volto? ("Per noi nessuno specchio", p. 189)	The world has become so opaque or we do not have a face any longer?

38 These examples reveal that a semantic continuum underpins the three types of opacity presented here, since aspects of each category are present in the others, thus making any attempt to draw a clearcut distinction between them unhelpful, if not impossible. At the same time, such categories can help us visualize the high levels of ambiguity with which Guidacci approaches ideas of epistemic clarity and darkness, on the one hand, and explores experiential and specialist knowledge, on the other. Notably, the poems suggest that both health providers and patients can be victims of acts of epistemic obscurity,

and that only through a synergistic encounter between different types of knowledge can we achieve healing.

- 39 Standing neither with patients nor with providers, Guidacci embraces the paradoxical and complex thinking that is the domain of translation (Arnaldi et al., 2022, p. 397), thinking that promotes a shared and non-hierarchical model of epistemology. Here, not only are the situated and embodied knowledges of the many actors involved in the communication (patients, providers, friends and families, social workers, etc.) equally considered, but the incommunicable and the incomprehensible are also taken into account as forms of knowability. Epistemic opacity should at times be protected for the medically just project to succeed, and notions of (un)translatability can help us deal with the losses incurred through the lack of clear semantic content.
- 40 As evident from the examples discussed above, in *Neurosuite* poetry itself becomes a function of translation—that is, a language of difference capable of revealing the foreign connection between alienation and disease.¹⁹ The lyrical register expresses this phenomenon in several ways, not only by making use of metaphors and similes, but also by developing a poetics of error (in Latin, the noun “error” and the verb “to err” have the same etymological root); such a poetics supports ideas of deliberate obscurity, opacity, and deviance from epistemic norms. On the linguistic level, this is reflected, for example, in the frequency of words such as *zigzag*—“Like drunks, they guide us / in the zigzag that belongs to no-one” (come ubriachi ci guidano / nello *zigzag* che a nessuno appartiene) (Guidacci, 1999a, p. 191)—and “maybe” (*forse*). The latter emblematically provides the title of one of the poems—“Too many of our questions received only/one answer: ‘maybe’” (Troppe nostre domande ebbero solo/una risposta: ‘forse’) (Guidacci, 1999a, p. 188). On the thematic level, psychiatric illness is explored as nostalgia for a homeland – “Can you tell me to which world you belong?, ‘To Which World’” (sai dirmi a che mondo appartieni?’, ‘A che mondo’) (Guidacci, 1999a, p. 202)—or for a god—“Faith doubt disbelief / are the three knotted threads / that we cannot untangle, ‘Threads’” (la fede il dubbio l’incredulità / sono i tre fili annodati / che non riusciamo a districare, ‘Fili’) (Guidacci, 1999a, p. 191), thereby highlighting the translational connection between the experience of exile and that of disease. This reading enriches our

current understanding of Guidacci's poetry as "highly spiritual" (Wood, 2005) to underscore the fundamentally therapeutic dimension of faith as a form of healing, and the role of translation as a way of engaging with the Other by definition, that is, God.

Conclusions: In praise of epistemic darkness

- 41 By developing the intuition that illness is a foreignizing experience, I have suggested that certain insights and concepts from translation studies can be deployed to study non-narrative accounts of illness, given two facts: first, that translation is by definition the "science-art" of being/becoming an Other, and second that illness narratives more often than not defy ideas of narrativity, meaning making, readership, authorship, and plot. With its non-normative use of language, poetry helps us better understand stories of illness by uncovering their translational dimensions, as the analysis of Guidacci's *Neurosuite* movingly reveals. Taken as a body of work, Guidacci's poems offer a synthesis of the many ways in which a translational turn in narrative medicine may bring into focus and under the same lens the very values that inform the discipline, from its focus on ethics to its patient-oriented vision of healing. The poems function as a site of lyrical perception and epistemic disruption by documenting a type of non-narrative, poetic knowledge produced by, and for the benefit of, the margins of the healthcare system. Concurrently, these poems disclose how translation is inherently a self-critical concept and practice that invites us to question our beliefs and values, including the assumption that translating is always beneficial and harmless. As the analysis presented here has demonstrated, there are times when we are called upon to preserve the incommunicable and the untranslatable as ethical and just forms of knowledge, especially in contexts of psychiatric suffering.
- 42 Guidacci's poetry took us "to the centre of the night" (nel centro della notte) (Guidacci, 1999b, p. 175). It pointed to some of the ways in which a translational epistemology—one that privileges non-linear, non-hierarchical, complex, and multivocal possibilities of knowledge—can contribute to more equitable theories and practices of narrative medicine, even (and especially) when the task of under-

standing and treating those who suffer seems almost impossible to accomplish. As a medium for understanding non-narrative accounts of illness, translation accounts for the 'black holes' into which psychiatric knowledge may fall, not to celebrate ignorance nor to incite resignation, but rather to accommodate different forms of storytelling and modes of knowledge, including those produced, or failing to be created, in the midst of suffering.

- 43 I have invoked a translational turn in narrative medicine, not with the intention to challenge or reinvent narrativity as an episteme, a genre, and a concept, but rather in the hope of foregrounding narrative medicine's essential, translational nature that encompasses all of the above. I believe that concepts from translation studies and the languages of poetry should be systematically incorporated in narrative medicine, its theory and practice, and I aspire for this article to contribute towards achieving this critical integration.

Dov'è l'oscurità
di cui tanto piangevi? Sei tutta illuminata (Guidacci, 1999b, p. 214)

Where is it the obscurity
that caused your great weeping? You are fully illuminated.

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NOTES

¹ I use the terms illness and disease as synonyms. In a seminal study authored by American psychiatrist Leon Eisenberg, the distinction between these two terms is presented as a “dysfunctional consequence of the Cartesian dichotomy” between mind and body, a dichotomy that has led us

to believe that “patients suffer ‘illnesses’” whereas “doctors diagnose and treat diseases” (Eisenberg, 1977, p. 9). I share Eisenberg’s critique of this distinction.

2 While Rita Charon has turned it into a coherent discipline, the origins and development of narrative medicine reflect a long and diverse history. For example, Greenhalgh and Hurwitz (1998), a substantial publication which came out nearly a decade before Charon’s interventions, still offers important insights into the field.

3 In “Illness as a foreign tongue: Therapeutic translation in contemporary Italian women’s poetry”, I defined as outer translation “the process whereby the poet-patient uses translation as a means to express in words the experience of her own illness” (Arnaldi, 2022a, p. 301). Conversely, “inner translation occurs when the poet-patient translates the doctor’s medical jargon into a comprehensible language” (Arnaldi, 2022a, p. 301).

4 Alan Bleakley and Shane Neilson (2021; 2024) have pioneered “lyrical medicine” as a productive counter discourse to the dominance of the narrative paradigm in healthcare. See also Lawrence Kirmayer’s (2000) foundational work. Bleakley and Neilson (2021) suggest that tolerance of ambiguity is a key resource both in poetry and medicine (p. 159). My study contributes to this line of enquiry within the medical humanities by connecting lyrical poetry to its translational dimensions.

5 That psychiatry offers a significant venue for testing narrative medicine’s concepts and practices is demonstrated by the development of a specific branch of narrative medicine called narrative psychiatry (Lewis, 2011).

6 The title of this section, “The Experience of the Foreign”, mirrors that of the English translation of Antoine Berman’s seminal book, *The experience of the foreign: Culture and translation in Romantic Germany* (1992), first published in French in 1984 under the title *L’épreuve de l’étranger. Culture et traduction dans l’Allemagne romantique: Herder, Goethe, Schlegel, Novalis, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Hölderlin*.

7 In “Post-narrative: An appeal”, Angela Woods (2011) warns us against the risk of treating narrative “as both the primary and the best and most important mechanism through which to make meaning of illness” (p. 404). Woods (2011) notes that the tendency to do so “has led to a neglect of other modes of reflecting upon and representing experience”, such as poetry, music, and gesture (p. 404). On the gestural embodiment of symptoms in particular, see Heath (2002).

8 I outlined and examined this history in a book chapter entitled “Giacomo Leopardi in the Anthropocene: Translating the non-human from animals to AI” (Arnaldi, forthcoming).

9 Outside translation studies, Fredrik Svenaeus (2000) has conceptualized the alienating condition of the self in illness by developing the Heideggerian notion of *Unheimlichkeit*, meaning “uncanny unhomelikeness” (2000, p. 125). The notion of the unhomelikeness of illness bears a striking similarity to Homi Bhabha’s (1994) elaboration of the unhome-like experience of the postcolonial, exilic subject for whom translation is a fundamental dimension of communication and existence (p. 10).

10 Benjamin (1968) presents a mystical conception of translation. He proposes that beyond the surface meaning of words, there exists a “pure language” or “language of truth” that transcends the specific languages involved in the translation process. According to Benjamin, the ultimate purpose of translation is not to convey the mere meaning of the original text but to hint at this universal truth that underlies all languages.

11 Both Kious et al. (2023) and Drozdowicz (2021) move from Miranda Fricker’s (2007) foundational work on and definition of epistemic injustice.

12 I thank John Ødemark for perceptively pointing out that the concept of foreignization may have different meanings and implications in biomedicine, and in literary and cultural studies. His observations made me realize that patient discourse contains, but in no way is limited to, an account of symptoms. From this perspective, attending to the original is a primary goal of both clinical and literary practices.

13 For a compelling analysis of this divide, see Kortmann (2010, p. 203).

14 Nicola Gardini movingly explores the idea of health as process. In *Io sono salute. Quando la letteratura incontra la medicina* (2023) (“I am health. When literature meets medicine”), he rethinks and subverts common notions of health (and death) by suggesting that health is not the opposite of disease; rather, it is a process that reaches its culmination only when we die (p. 19–20). It follows that health is not a prerogative of the healthy, in that the sick also pursue and/or can possess a form of it.

15 Hermeticism is a literary movement that emerged in Italy during the early twentieth century, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. It is characterized by a focus on introspective, obscure, and often mystical poetry that seeks to convey the ineffable nature of human experience. The term “Hermetic” is derived from Hermes Trismegistus, a legendary Hellenistic

figure who is associated with the esoteric wisdom of the alchemical tradition, symbolizing the movement's cryptic and enigmatic style. Poets of this movement, such as Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970) and Eugenio Montale (1896-1981), used concise language and free verse to explore themes of solitude, silence, and the metaphysical pondering of life and nature.

16 For an introduction to Guidacci's *Neurosuite*, see Marrani (2012).

17 For the sake of consistency, all English translations of Guidacci's Italian original are mine. I quote from the 1999 *Le Lettere* edition of *Le poesie* throughout (Guidacci, 1999b). The page numbers of the Italian text, alongside the titles of the poems from which the quoted lines are taken, are provided in parentheses. A selection of poems from Guidacci's *Neurosuite* was published by Kelsey Street Press, with translations into English by Marina La Palma, in 1975 (this edition is now out of print). Other poems from *Neurosuite* appear in various collections and anthologies.

18 Glissant's understanding of opacity encompasses the spectrum (and spectres) of untranslatability. For an in-depth discussion of when translation can function as an instrument of misdirection and silencing, rather than producing positive effects, see Italiano (2020) and Baker (2019). These studies do not focus on contexts of healthcare; the current study is one of the first to chart the meaning and role of opacity in medicine.

19 I borrow the expression "foreign connection"—another striking example of the potential contribution of translation studies to narrative medicine—from the poet and translator Jamie McKendrick (2020, p. 4).

ABSTRACTS

English

This essay invokes a translational turn in narrative medicine. My argument is grounded in two primary considerations: first, that illness is a fundamentally estranging experience resembling that of speaking a foreign language, and second, that discourses of and around health and disease have been dominated by narrative paradigms that have failed to capture the essentially translational (as in foreign and foreignizing) speech, or lack thereof, of those who suffer. This argument challenges the master plot of illness as narrative in favour of a disruptive idea of illness as translation. Margherita Guidacci's *Neurosuite* (1999a; first published 1970)—a collection of 80 poems recounting the poet-patient's experience of incarceration in a psychiatric hospital in Italy—serves as a primary source of translational epistemology and psychiatric knowledge. Through the analysis of selected passages, I demonstrate how translation itself is a self-critical concept and practice that invites us to question our beliefs and values, including the assumption that translating is always beneficial and harmless. At times, I argue, it is important to preserve the incommunicable and the untranslatable as ethical and just forms of knowledge, especially in contexts of psychiatric suffering. A translational approach to narrative medicine can assist us in addressing, and potentially exploiting, these epistemic gaps, thereby putting the experience of the sufferer at the forefront of both clinical and literary practice.

A synopsis of this article can be found [here](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.485) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.485>).

Français

Cet essai plaide pour un tournant traductionnel dans la médecine narrative. Mon raisonnement repose sur deux considérations principales : la première est que la maladie est une expérience fondamentalement aliénante, semblable à celle de parler une langue étrangère ; la seconde, que les discours sur la santé et la maladie ont été dominés par des paradigmes narratifs qui n'ont pas réussi à saisir le discours essentiellement traductionnel, au sens d'étranger et aliénant, de ceux qui souffrent (ni même son absence). Cette thèse remet en question la vision dominante de la maladie comme expérience narrative et racontable en faveur de l'idée radicale de la maladie comme traduction. *Neurosuite* de Margherita Guidacci (1970) – une collection de 80 poèmes racontant l'expérience d'internement du poète-patiente dans un hôpital psychiatrique en Italie – représente une source importante d'épistémologie traductionnelle et de savoir psychiatrique. À travers l'analyse de passages sélectionnés, je démontre comment la traduction elle-même est un concept et une pratique autocritique qui invite à interroger nos convictions et nos valeurs, y compris l'idée selon laquelle traduire est toujours une opération souhaitable et avantageuse. Je soutiens qu'il est parfois important de préserver l'incommunicable et l'intraduisible en tant que formes de connaissance plus éthiques et justes, notamment dans des contextes de souffrance psychiatrique. Une approche traductionnelle de la médecine narrative peut nous aider à aborder, et idéalement à valoriser, ces lacunes épistémiques, mettant ainsi l'expérience du de la personne souffrante au premier plan, tant dans la pratique clinique que dans la pratique littéraire.

Il est possible de lire un résumé détaillé de l'article [ci-après \(https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.519\)](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.519).

العربية

يستحضر هذا المقال تحولاً ترجمياً في الطب السردي، وترتكز حجتي هنا على مرتكزين أساسيين: الأول أن المرض بطبيعته يُعدُّ تجربة مُنفرة قد تشبه تجربة التحدث بلغة أجنبية، والآخر أن الخطابات المتمحورة حول الصحة والمرض قد هيمنت عليها أنماط سردية فشلت في فهم الخطاب الترجمي الأساس في اللغة المترجم منها والمترجم إليها، أو أنها افترقت إلى هذا الخطاب كُليّة عند أولئك الذين يمرون بهذه المعاناة. وتتحدى هذه الحجة الفكرة الرئيسية التي تنظر للمرض باعتباره شكلاً من أشكال السرد، منادية بفكرة أخرى مزعجة تنظر للمرض على أنه ترجمة. وتتألف مجموعة مارغريتا غويداتشي "نيوروسويت" الشعرية (1970; first published 1999a)، التي من 80 قصيدة تروي تجربة الشاعر المريض المحتجز في مستشفى للأمراض النفسية في إيطاليا؛ مُشكلةً بذلك مصدراً أساسياً للإبستمولوجيا الترجمية والمعرفة النفسية. ومن خلال تحليل مقاطع مختارة، سأعمل على توضيح كيف تغدو الترجمة في حد ذاتها مفهوماً وممارسة نقدية ذاتية تدعونا إلى التشكيك في معتقداتنا وقيمنا، بما في ذلك افتراض أن الترجمة مفيدة وغير ضارة على الدوام. وأرى في بعض الأحيان أهمية الحفاظ على ما يستعصي نقله أو ترجمته باعتباره شكلاً أخلاقياً وعادلاً للمعرفة لاسيما في سياق المعاناة النفسية. ويمكن أن يساعدنا النهج الترجمي في الطب السردي في الوقوف على تلك الفجوات المعرفية وسدها، مما يضع تجربة المريض في طليعة الممارسة السريرية والأدبية.

بإمكانكم الاطلاع على ملخص المقالات عبر هذا <https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.705> (on.705) [الرابط \(https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.705\)](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.705).

Deutsch

Dieser Aufsatz beschwört einen „translationalen Turn“ in der Narrativen Medizin. Die folgende Erörterung stützt sich auf zwei primäre Bemerkungen: erstens, dass Krankheit eine grundsätzlich entfremdende Erfahrung ist, die dem Sprechen einer Fremdsprache ähnelt, und zweitens, dass Diskurse über Gesundheit und Krankheit von narrativen Paradigmen dominiert werden, die nicht in der Lage sind, die wesentliche translationale (fremde und verfremdende) Sprache bzw. den Mangel an Sprache der Leidenden zu erfassen. Diese Erörterung stellt die traditionelle Auffassung von Krankheit als Narrativ in Frage und befürwortet eine disruptive Auffassung von Krankheit als Translation. Margherita Guidaccis *Neurosuite* (1999a; erstmals veröffentlicht 1970) – eine Sammlung von 80 Gedichten, die von der Dichterin-Patientin erlebte Erfahrung der Einsperrung in eine italienische psychiatrische Anstalt berichtet, dient als Primärquelle für translationale Epistemologie und psychiatrisches Wissen. Durch die Analyse ausgewählter Stellen wird dargelegt, wie Translation ein selbstkritisches Konzept und eine selbstkritische Praxis ist, die uns einlädt, eigene Überzeugungen und Werte zu hinterfragen, einschließlich der Annahme, dass Translation immer vorteilhaft und harmlos ist. Es wird argumentiert, dass es gelegentlich wichtig ist, das Unsagbare und das Unübersetzbare als ethische und gerechte Wissensformen zu erhalten, vornehmlich in Zusammenhang mit psychiatrischem Leiden. Eine translationale Herangehensweise an Narrative Medizin vermag, epistemische Lücken aufzugreifen und sie möglicherweise auszunutzen. Dadurch könnte man das Erlebnis des Leidenden in den Vordergrund sowohl der klinischen als auch der literarischen Praxis stellen. Eine Zusammenfassung des Aufsatzes finden Sie [hier](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.602) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.602>).

Italiano

Questo saggio auspica una svolta traduttiva nella medicina narrativa. Il mio ragionamento si basa su due considerazioni principali: la prima, che la malattia è fondamentalmente un'esperienza alienante, simile a quella di parlare una lingua straniera; la seconda, che discorsi su salute e malattia sono stati dominati da paradigmi narrativi che non sono riusciti a cogliere la comunicazione essenzialmente traduttiva, nel senso di straniera e straniente, di coloro che soffrono (né tantomeno l'assenza di tale comunicazione). Questa tesi sfida la visione dominante della malattia come esperienza narrativa e narrabile a favore di un'idea radicale di malattia come traduzione. *Neurosuite* di Margherita Guidacci (1970) – una raccolta di 80 poesie che racconta l'esperienza di internamento del poeta-paziente in un ospedale psichiatrico in Italia – rappresenta una fonte primaria di epistemologia traduttiva e sapere psichiatrico. Attraverso l'analisi di passaggi selezionati, dimostro come la traduzione stessa sia concetto e pratica auto-critica che invita a mettere in discussione convinzioni e valori, incluso il presupposto che tradurre sia sempre un'operazione desiderabile e vantaggiosa. A volte, sostengo, è importante preservare l'incomunicabile e l'intraducibile in quanto forme di conoscenza più etiche e giuste, specialmente in contesti di sofferenza psichiatrica. Un approccio traduttivo alla medicina narrativa può aiutarci ad affrontare, e idealmente a valorizzare, queste lacune epistemiche, mettendo così l'esperienza del sofferente in primo piano sia nella pratica clinica sia in quella letteraria.

È possibile accedere a un riassunto dettagliato dell'articolo [qui](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.520) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.520>) di seguito.

Fiteny malagasy

Ity lahatsorata ity dia maneho fihovana momban'ny fitsaboana miankina amin'ny fitantarana. Fanadihadihana fotok'hevitra roa samihafa no entiko anehona izany: voalohany, zavatra niainana tsy mahazatra, azo hampitahana amin'ny fitenenana teny vahiny, ny aretina, faharoa, matetika ny fotok'hevitra manodidina ny fahasalamana sy aretina dia hanjakan'ny fitantarana paradigma noho izany tsy ampy naha koa tsy mahavita manasongadina ny vontoatin'ny fandikan-teny (toy ny am'ny vahiny sy ny maha vahiny) hoan'ireo marary. Noho izany, ny hevitra dia manipaka ny fototry ny aretina ho toy ny fitantarana ary manohana izany hoy toy ny fandikana. Margherita Guidacci's *Neurosuite* (1999a; first published 1970). Famakafakana andiana tononkalo 80 nosoratan'ny poeta mitantara ny zavaniainan'ireo marary tao amin'ny hopitaly hoan'ireo marary ara-tsaina any Italy no ijoroan'ny fanazavana. Tamin'ny alalan'ny famakafakana karazana adininy voafantina no anazavako fa ny fandikana dia manosika antsika hanontany tena momban'ny finoana sy ny soatoavintsika ary koa ny fiheverana fa mahaso hatrany ary tsy misy atahorana ny fandikan-teny. Ilaina koa anefa ny fitahirizana ireo hevitra tsy afaka ampitana naha adika ho etika sy fomba fahaizana, indrindra momban'ny aretina ara-tsaina. Manampy antsika ahazoana tombon-tsoa entina mameno ireo banga epistemika ny fampiharina ny fandikana amin'ny fitsaboana miankina amin'ny fitantarana, any ka afaka atao ho laharam-pahamehana ara-pistaboana sy ara-literationa ny zavatra iainan'ireo marary.

We would like to thank Finaritra Raoelijaona (University of Oxford, UK) for this translation of the article's abstract in Malagasy.

Polski

Niniejszy artykuł odwołuje się do przełomu translacyjnego w medycynie narracyjnej. Argumentacja oparta jest o dwie główne tezy: po pierwsze, że schorzenie jest przeżyciem zasadniczo wyobcowującym, podobnie do mowy w obcym języku; po drugie, że dyskursy na temat zdrowia i choroby zostały przeważone narracyjnymi paradygmatami, które zawiodły w uchwyceniu przede wszystkim translacyjnej wypowiedzi (tzw. obcej, czyniącej obcość), lub jej braku, tych, którzy cierpią. Powyższy argument kwestionuje pierwszorzędność choroby jako narracja na rzecz idei, nieco kłopotliwej, choroby jako translacja. *Neurosuite* (1999a; opublikowany po raz pierwszy w 1970 roku) Margherity Guidacci – zbiór osiemdziesięciu wierszy opowiadających o doświadczeniu zamknięcia poetki-pacjentki w szpitalu psychiatrycznym we Włoszech – pełni tutaj rolę głównego źródła epistemologii translacyjnej i wiedzy psychiatrycznej. Celem jest zaprezentować, poprzez analizę wybranych fragmentów poezji, jak tłumaczenie samo w sobie jest pojęciem i praktyką samokrytyczną, która zachęca nas do kwestionowania tego w co wierzymy, a także naszych wartości, w tym założenie, że w każdym przypadku, tłumaczenie jest korzystne i nieszkodliwe. Artykuł chwilami uwzględnia, że ważne jest zachowanie tego, co jest nieprzekazywalne i nieprzetłumaczalne, jako etyczne i sprawiedliwe rodzaje wiedzy, zwłaszcza w kontekstach cierpienia psychicznego. Translacyjne podejście do medycyny narracyjnej może pomóc nam w rozprawianiu się, ewentualnie w zużytkowaniu, powyższych luk epistemicznych, tym samym stawiając doświadczenie osoby cierpiącej na pierwszej linii zarówno w praktyce klinicznej, jak i literackiej.

Streszczenie artykułu można znaleźć [tutaj](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.604) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.604>).

Русский

Это эссе призывает к использованию нового переводческого подхода к нарративной медицине. Моя точка зрения основана на двух основных соображениях: во-первых, что болезнь — это фундаментально отчуждающий опыт, напоминающий практику разговора на иностранном языке, и, во-вторых, что дискурсы о здоровье и болезни управляются нарративными парадигмами, которые не в состоянии передать переводческую по своей сути (то есть иностранную и отчуждающую) речь (или же ее отсутствие) тех, кто страдает. Данная статья оспаривает общепринятую модель, которая представляет болезнь как повествование, вместо этого поддерживая революционную идею, согласно которой болезнь интерпретируется как перевод. Книга *Neurosuite* Маргериты Гвидаччи (1999a; впервые опубликована в 1970 году) — это сборник из 80 стихотворений, повествующих об опыте заключения поэта-пациента в психиатрической больнице в Италии. Это произведение служит основным источником переводческой эпистемологии и психиатрического знания. С помощью анализа избранных отрывков я демонстрирую, как сам перевод является самокритичной концепцией и практикой, которая призывает нас подвергнуть сомнению наши собственные убеждения и ценности, включая предположение о том, что процесс перевода всегда полезен и безвреден. Я утверждаю, что порой важно сохранять непередаваемое и непереводимое в качестве этически справедливых форм знания — особенно в контексте психиатрических страданий. Переводческий подход к нарративной медицине может помочь нам устранить и потенциально использовать эти эпистемические пробелы, таким образом выдвигая опыт страдальца на передний план как клинической, так и литературной практики.

[Здесь вы можете найти более подробное описание статьи \(https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.609\).](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.609)

точки

Ин эссе як чархиши тарҷумавиро дар тибби ривоятӣ талаб мекунад. Нуқтаи назари ман бар ду мулоҳизаи асосӣ асос ёфтааст: якум, ин ки беморӣ таҷрибаи аслан бегонакунанда аст, ки таҷрибаи гуфтугӯ бо забони хориҷиро ба ёд меорад ва дуюм, ин ки дискурсо дар бораи саломатӣ ва беморӣ аз ҷониби парадигмаҳои ривоятӣ идора карда мешаванд, ки сухани табиатан тарҷумавии (яъне бегона ва бегонакунанда) касонро, ки азият мекашанд, интиқол дода наметавонанд. Ин далел тарҳи аслии бемориро ҳамчун ривоят зери суол мебарад ва фикри навро, ки беморӣ ҳамчун тарҷума аст, пешниҳод мекунад. Neurosuite-и Маргерита Гвидаччи (1999а; нашри аввал соли 1970) маҷмӯаи 80 шеърест, ки аз таҷрибаи ҳабс шудани шоир-бемор дар бемористони рӯҳӣ дар Итолиё нақл мекунад. Он ҳамчун манбаъи асосии эпистемологияи тарҷумавӣ ва донишҳои равоношиносӣ хизмат мекунад. Ба тавассути таҳлили порчаҳои интихобшуда, ман нишон медиҳам, ки тарҷума худ як мафҳум ва амалияи худтанқидкунона аст, ки моро водор мекунад эътиқодҳо ва арзишҳои худро зерини шубҳа гузорем, аз ҷумла ба гумони он ки тарҷума ҳамеша муфид ва безарар мебошад. Ман баҳс мекунам, ки баъзан нигоҳ доштани баъзе чизҳоро ҳамчун шаклҳои ахлоқӣ ва одилонаи дониш (махсусан дар заминаи ранҷу азобҳои равоӣ) муҳим аст. Муносибати тарҷумавӣ ба тибби ривоятӣ метавонад ба мо дар ҳалли фасл ва эҳтимолан истифода бурдани ин холигоҳҳои ирфонӣ кӯмак кунад ва ба ин васила таҷрибаи ҷабрдидаҳо ҳам дар амалияи клиникӣ ва ҳам адабӣ ба пеш гузорад.

Тавсифи муфасссали мақоларо дар ин ҷо пайдо кардан мумкин аст (<http://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounters-in-translation.606>).

Türkçe

Bu makale, anlatısal tıpta bir çeviri “dönüşü” çağrısında bulunmaktadır. Makaleye konu olan argümanımı başlıca iki düşünceye dayandırıyorum. İlk olarak, hastalığın esasında yabancı bir dil konuşmaya benzeyen yabancılaştırıcı bir deneyim olduğunu, ikinci olarak ise sağlık ve hastalık hakkındaki ve konularındaki söylemlerin, hastalıktan muzdarip olanların esasen çeviriye dayalı (yabancı ve yabancılaştırıcı gibi) konuşmalarını veya bunların eksikliğini yakalamakta başarısız olan anlatı paradigmalarının hâkimiyetinde bulunduğunu savunuyorum. Bu argüman, anlatı olarak hastalık yönündeki hâkim anlayışa, çeviri olarak hastalık gibi ezber bozan bir düşünce lehinde meydan okumaktadır. Margherita Guidacci’nin –şair/hasta olarak İtalya’daki bir psikiyatri hastanesinde yaşadığı hapsolme deneyimini anlattığı 80 şiirden oluşan– *Neurosuite* (1999a; ilk basımı 1970) adlı kitabı, çeviri epistemolojisi ve psikiyatrik bilgi açısından birincil kaynak niteliğindedir. Bu kitaptan seçmiş olduğum bazı bölümleri inceleyerek çevirinin kendisinin nasıl öz eleştirel bir kavram ve pratik olduğunu, çeviri eyleminin daima faydalı ve zararsız olduğu varsayımı da dâhil olmak üzere bizi, inançlarımızı ve değerlerimizi sorgulamaya teşvik ettiğini gösteriyorum. Zaman zaman, özellikle ruhsal ızdırap bağlamlarında, anlatılamaz ve çevrilemez olanı etik ve adil bilgi türleri olarak korumanın önemli olduğunu savunuyorum. Anlatısal tıbbı çeviri odaklı bir yaklaşım, bu bilgisel eksiklikleri ele almamıza ve belki de bunlardan istifade etmemize yardımcı olabilir ve böylece hem klinik hem de edebî çalışmalarda hastaların deneyimlerini ön plana çıkarabilir.

Bu makalenin genişletilmiş özetine [buradan](https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounter-s-in-translation.612) (<https://dx.doi.org/10.35562/encounter-s-in-translation.612>) ulaşabilirsiniz.

INDEX

Keywords

translation, narrative medicine, epistemology, Margherita Guidacci, Italian lyric poetry, psychiatry

Mots-clés

Traduction, médecine narrative, épistémologie, Margherita Guidacci, poésie lyrique italienne, psychiatrie

الكلمات المفتاحية

الترجمة، الطب السردي، الإبستمولوجيا، مارغريتا غويداتشي، الشعر الغنائي الإيطالي، الطب النفسي

Schlagwortindex

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Parole chiave

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Teny fanalahidy

fandikana, fitsaboana miankina amin'ny fitantarana, epistemolojia, Margherita Guidacci, tononkalo Italiana, aretina ara-tsaina

Słowa kluczowe

translacja, medycyna narracyjna, epistemologia, Margherita Guidacci, Włoska poezja liryczna, psychiatria

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перевод, нарративная медицина, эпистемология, Маргерита Гвидаччи, итальянская лирическая поэзия, психиатрия

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Anahtar kelimeler

çeviri, anlatısal tıp, epistemoloji, Margherita Guidacci, İtalyan lirik şiiri, psikiyatri

AUTHOR

Marta Arnaldi

University of Oxford, UK

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/279900120>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7048-9807>

Synopsis

Synopsis: The translational epistemologies of World Literature

Charles Forsdick

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TEXT

- 1 Translation has regularly been deployed as a defining aspect of World Literature, notably in the work of David Damrosch, who claims in a number of studies that it is circulation between contexts in different languages that underpins the ‘gains’ of any work which falls into the category, i.e., it is translation that permits texts to “circulat[e] out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin” (Damrosch, 2003, p. 12). Such transnational, transcultural and (crucially) translingual displacements also inform in part Pascale Casanova’s (1999) centripetal thesis in *La République mondiale des lettres*, according to which passage through Paris (often accompanied by translation into French) functions as a form of literary consecration and often canonization. This article explores, expands and ultimately challenges such readings by focusing, in addition, on the production and consumption of World Literature, suggesting not only that translation may form, in such contexts and in the light of such understandings, a key trope or lens through which writing associated with this category may be identified and explored, but also that World Literature, conceived in such circulatory and relational terms, allows us to analyze the presence and function of a translational epistemology.
- 2 Since its initial coinage by Goethe in the form of *Weltliteratur* in 1827, the concept of World Literature has sought to disrupt the methodological nationalism and associated (often ethnolinguistic) assumptions evident in the study of national literatures; it has often, however, replaced such biases with another, that of a monolingual epistemology that approaches literature alinguistically and fails to acknowledge the challenges of researching multilingually (Phipps, 2019). Such

monolingualism—evident in particular in Anglophone scholarship but perpetuated through the Anglonormativity underpinning the global academic publishing industry—has been rigorously critiqued by scholars such as David Gramling (2016), and there is growing awareness of a translational dynamics that underpins the circulation of works of literature in a global frame. In a pedagogical context, building on now well-established understandings of the (in)visibility of the translator, students studying World Literature in English only are increasingly taught to read translations consciously *qua* translations (Baer & Woods, 2022), foregrounding challenges identified as well as solutions proposed by the translator as opposed to assuming that they have seamless access as readers to the ‘original’. Such an approach echoes the increasing awareness, popularized in the outstanding work of scholars such as Clive Scott (2012; 2018), that translation may itself be the highest form of literary analysis, engaging as it does with the micro and the macro, and implying an incomparable intimacy with the text and a familiarity not only with its polysemy and other linguistic (and indeed multimodal) subtleties, but also close familiarity with intertextual and intercultural resonances. Such reflections on consumption and reception are then complemented with an increasing attention to production, with Rebecca Walkowitz (2015) exploring the extent to which World Literature is inherently “born translated”, i.e., how translation acts as a literary medium in its own right rather than only as an element of a text’s subsequent circulation.

- 3 This article builds on the above context in order to foreground the status of World Literature as a site of epistemic and cultural difference, in whose understanding translation plays a privileged and multiple role. As such, it seeks to move beyond translation as methodology to propose a translational epistemology, contributing to the growing emphasis on linguistic sensitivity in the construction of knowledge that is evident notably in Barbara Cassin’s philosophical interventions (2004) around the notion of the *(in)traduisible*, developed in relation to world literature by Emily Apter (2013) and others. The concept of the (un)translatable, I argue, is central to the study of World Literature itself as we grapple with the divergences and convergences between the term and its (not-quite) equivalents in other linguistic traditions: *Weltliteratur*, *littérature-monde*, *liter-*

atura mundial... At the same time, as Dilip Menon has recently demonstrated in *Changing Theory: Thinking from the Global South* (2022), any systematic attempt to develop reading and analytical practices suited to analyzing the global depends on generating a conceptual vocabulary underpinned by epistemologies that will necessarily be actively multilingual but freighted at the same time through translational approaches that seek to de-create language hegemonies. But the additional challenge in developing a translational epistemology from this context— inherent in both the text and its subsequent interpretation—is to avoid the polarizing implications of any bilingual (or even multilingual) approach, and to follow Tim Ingold and others in challenging the assumption that translation undermines a concept of “the world in which people dwell as a continuous and unbounded landscape, endlessly varied in its features and contours, yet without seams or breaks” (Ingold, 1993, p. 22).

- 4 One of the key thinkers to articulate this approach—in an initially Antillean then more global frame—was Edouard Glissant, signatory of the 2007 manifesto “For a World-Literature in French”. Through his notion of *Tout-Monde*, Glissant in fact questions the concept of *littérature-monde*, in part by challenging the monolingualism inherent in the “in French” by which that body of writing was initially defined, in part by linking his own reflections on writing “in the presence of all the world’s languages” (*en présence de toutes les langues du monde*) (Glissant, 1996 ; p. 40, my translation) to a coherent statement of translational epistemology that is evident throughout his work as both literary practitioner and global thinker. In one of his final works, *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Glissant presents translation not as a secondary activity but as a literary genre in its own right: “It is not only an invention limited to marvellous equivalences between two language systems; it also creates new categories and concepts, it shakes up existing orders” (*Elle n’est pas seulement une invention limitée à des équivalences merveilleuses entre deux systèmes de langage, elle crée aussi des catégories et des concepts inédits, elle bouscule des ordres établis*) (Glissant, 2005, p. 143; my translation). Translation is understood here to “put languages and cultures into circulation in new interlocutory contexts, joining them and their historical traditions in new and dynamic ways” (Bermann, 2014, p. 80). Although largely absent hitherto from the literature on translation

theory, Glissant produced across his career a substantial body of thought on language and translation. At the same time, as part of an emerging canon of contemporary World Literature, his own writing has itself undergone a process of translation that has ensured its impact on postcolonial thought more broadly—a process continued by the Glissant Translation Project.

- 5 In *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Glissant associates translation with the notion of “Relation” previously central to much of his work, suggesting that translation may be seen as a form of “multirelation”. This links all parts of the world without relying in the process on any move towards universal equivalence that ultimately erases or absorbs political, cultural, and historical specificities. Celia Britton (2008) sees translation in Glissant as “the invention of a new *langage* that bridges two *langues*” (p. 78), that is, as a process of creativity that relates and activates linguistic and cultural systems seen as distinctive and transforms that linkage into a new form of translational relation. Translation is presented in this article accordingly as a key element of Glissant’s notion of a “new archipelagic thought”, in which opacity functions in a similar way to untranslatability, avoiding the rigid polarizations of closed systems of thought. I conclude by exploring how, in *Traité du Tout-Monde* (1997), Glissant creates the foundations of a translational epistemology via his description of an ‘art of the fugue’.

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AUTHOR

Charles Forsdick

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/082081069>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7470-8421>

ISNI : <http://www.isni.org/0000000054177937>

BNF : <https://data.bnf.fr/fr/14509833>

Synopsis: Translating concepts from Latin American philosophy: Ontologies and aesthetics in the work of Rodolfo Kusch

Joshua M. Price

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TEXT

- 1 In *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1977), Argentinian philosopher Rodolfo Kusch aims to recuperate a form of thinking he believes lies at the root of the American continent, though he thinks it is covered or buried underneath a dominant way of thinking imported from Europe. “The search for an Indigenous way of thinking”, he explains, “is motivated not only by the desire to uncover it scientifically, but by the need to rescue a style of thinking which, as I see it, is found in the very depth of América and maintains a certain potency among people born and rooted here” (Kusch, 2010, p. lxxv). Thinking in and from the Americas has an ontological dimension for him: *being* in the Americas is different from *being* in Europe. Kusch ties this ontological distinction to a linguistic and grammatical distinction in Spanish that does not exist in English: *ser* vs. *estar*. This and other key concepts posed a challenge for my co-translator, the late Maria Lugones, and me as we set out to produce an English translation of his book, which we eventually published as *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* (Kusch, 2010).
- 2 The purpose of this essay, however, is not merely to fret over how to translate words from one language to another; rather, it is to consider how translating key concepts in a given body of work can bring worldviews and linguistic horizons into new relationships with one another and engender novel narratives and traditions. As Gaddis Rose (1998) has argued, translating concepts can further be a means of analyzing or interpreting those concepts. Translation, in this reading, is a way of giving textual and material life to the intellectual

activity of conceptual analysis, a way of embodying or realizing that analysis in textual form. In the particular case of translating Kusch, deciding whether and if so how to translate key concepts such as *estar* (to be) or *América* can provoke a reflection on the practice of translation itself. Thus, translating can be a metapragmatic exercise, engendering thinking by both translator and reader on how languages and conceptual schemas might stand in relation not only to each other but also in relation to an evolving social context in a dynamic way, a dynamism enhanced by the very practice of translation.

- 3 To illustrate how translation practices can instigate this kind of reflection, I focus on several difficult-to-translate concepts that Kusch identifies in common words from Latin American Spanish as his entry points to uncover the bases for an autochthonous Latin American philosophical tradition— or *Américan* philosophical tradition, as he puts it. In particular, the focus is on geographic, aesthetic, and ontological terminology. Some of the key terms Kusch isolates and that I engage with are *América* (which could be misleadingly translated as “America” or “the Americas”); *pulcritud* (order or cleanliness) in contrast to *hedor* (stench) as a binary at the heart of Latin American modernity; and, most of all, as I already mentioned, the distinction in Spanish between *estar* and *ser*, on which Kusch bases a complex ontological theory informed by Quechua and Aymara thinking. In subjecting these quotidian terms to exegesis and conferring upon them a philosophical heft, Kusch is not merely describing an existing state of affairs; instead, he points to a beyond, a hoped-for reality for Latin America that does not yet exist. The “*América*” of his title is aspirational. Correspondingly, we could describe the afterlife of *América* granted through the linguistic borrowing in our translation as a narrative reframing of the continent. Through the translation, we can see an emergent alternative to hegemonic geographies. If a shimmering, incipient *América* offers an alternative narrative to conventional geography with its deference to the nation state, national borders, and possibly identity, *pulcritud* and *hedor* present an alternative narrative along the axis of aesthetics and urban design, and the distinction between *ser* and *estar* an alternative ontological narrative.

- 4 The focus on Latin American thinking, social theory and philosophy allows new narratives to come into being. What emerges from the translation of Kusch's *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* is an alternative narrative to those taken for granted in European and Eurocentric thinking. This alternative narrative begins by describing the emergence of Eurocentric modernity *as seen from Latin America*. Eurocentric modernity, viewed from the margins, posits a split or binary divide between technological innovation, progress, economic advancement, and the lulling comforts of consumerism, on the one hand, and the perceived irrationality, ethnic diversity and Babel of multilingualism on the other. The complementary narrative, also from within the margins, projects an imaginary of América, predicated on a cosmic instability and logics of everyday life that break with positivism, linear reason, Newtonian causality, American pragmatism, the Cartesian divide of mind/body, as well as other dualist ontologies. We viewed the frontier of language as a threshold at which one could cut a hole in the fence – create an opening between languages – rather than a barrier one could only pass through conventional linguistic translation. Selecting a text and translating it is not just a question of aesthetics and semantics, but also of ethics and politics, and even potential futures. Thus translation— what is selected for translation and how it is translated—can also be a question of epistemic justice.

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AUTHOR

Joshua M. Price
Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/161216552>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0009-0006-2584-7605>

ISNI : <http://www.isni.org/0000000071164003>

Synopsis: Translation and the climate crisis: Attending to the local in a global emergency

Şebnem Susam-Saraeva

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TEXT

- 1 Discourse on the climate crisis is intrinsically dependent on and intertwined with the concept of translation. The term is used in distinct but interrelated senses in the relevant literature. The first, reflected in the term “knowledge translation”, refers to the dissemination of research findings to stakeholders and the general population. The second, closely related sense of translation concerns the rendering of scientific knowledge into effective action rather than merely disseminating it. These two interrelated meanings account for the bulk of references to translation in climate crisis discourse. Finally, reference is also made in climate crisis discourse to the more familiar but less acknowledged understanding of translation as rendering research papers, children’s literature addressing eco-anxiety, and other written material into different languages, as well as interpreting in international climate summits.
- 2 In the case of knowledge translation, the emphasis is on ‘translating’ the effects of the climate crisis into everyday language in order to facilitate climate science communication to non-experts. Knowledge translation is used in medicine to describe the combined efforts of many agents “translating knowledge from ‘bench to bedside’, or from basic research into clinical practice” (Ødemark et al., 2021, p. 153). In climate crisis discourse, the use of the term is sporadic and less regulated than in medicine, but the assumed flow of translation is similarly unidirectional. Information and findings by climate scientists are expected to be disseminated to a wide range of users, with varying levels of background in or understanding of climate science. It is recognized that this diversity of end users requires meticulous audience design that is appropriate for each occasion and outlet. And yet,

such design is rarely sought or achieved. Translating climate emergency research into concrete information that has immediate relevance to different sectors of society is seen as crucial for achieving action, though such translations inevitably risk being anthropocentric in terms of tailoring scientific information to specific human needs or expectations.

- 3 Despite the traditional emphasis on the need to achieve such knowledge transfer, scientists and policy makers are increasingly recognizing that they also have to listen to and learn from the diverse experiences of local communities. Global actions that need to be taken in order to slow down, stop or reverse global warming, which is contributing to the climate crisis, are expected to be uniform across the world, for example in terms of ending fossil fuel dependency, eliminating meat and dairy from diets, and switching to alternative, public means of transport. Yet locality is key in the experience of the climate crisis—whether it be floods, droughts, wildfires, heatwaves, or ice storms—as well as in the measures that need to be taken to address it. The same set of global ecological data means different things in different regions, i.e., the data need to be *interpreted* differently according to geological and sociological variants. The translation of scientific information therefore needs to take into account the specificities of the target audience in terms of time and place.
- 4 The second, more metaphorical use of translation in climate crisis discourse closely follows from the anxieties around knowledge translation. It mainly revolves around the idea of converting abstract information obtained through knowledge translation into tangible and viable action, but translation in this sense is also used to mean turning theory (or plans, evidence, laws, feelings) into practice, projects, and behavioural change. Here, instead of a bridge between knowledge producers and knowledge users, translation emerges as alchemy, a process of turning the abstract, analytical, and scientific into the concrete, practical, and socio-political, thus expediting the desired change. Depending on the viewpoint of the narrator, this type of translation is understood as the task of governments, politicians, policy makers, scientists, or lay people. In other words, the translator is designated as someone other than the narrator, their exact identification perpetually deferred. There is widespread agreement among researchers and activists that this type of translation faces many

challenges, ranging from short-sighted governmental policies to individual apathy.

- 5 The perceived disjuncture that needs to be transversed—between scientific information and its tangible impact, between cutting-edge research and its widespread application in law, government policies and individual lifestyle choices—has its roots in another perceived chasm: that between nature and society. If nature and society are seen as two different entities, the role of the natural sciences becomes one of “translat[ing] the facts about nature to society” and the scientific expert can be cast as “some sort of interpreter on behalf of nature” (Naustdalslid, 2011, p. 245), tasked with demonstrating the extent of damage inflicted on nature by society and minimizing this damage by offering scientific solutions. Critiquing this approach to the climate crisis, Naustdalslid rightly argues that “nature and society should be seen not only as interdependent, but also as two interlinked systems where the boundaries between them are becoming blurred” (2011, p. 246).
- 6 Interlingual translation undoubtedly plays a critical role in both the formation and the spread of climate crisis discourse, and is particularly important given that climate crisis action emphasizes inclusivity and the global circulation of information. There is particular emphasis on the way Indigenous communities around the world are experiencing the climate emergency, and on how they can contribute to the debate. However, with little or no interpreting provision, international delegates in climate summits often find the debates difficult to make sense of and contribute to, given that they have to follow complex legal and scientific discussions in their third or fourth languages. I argue that recognizing the significance of local cultural perspectives, considering the ways in which such perspectives are reflected in and shaped by language, and reflecting on the ramifications of interlingual translation of climate crisis discourse may challenge mainstream expectations of knowledge translation in the field and may inspire climate scientists to identify other, more effective ways of turning their findings into action.

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AUTHOR

Şebnem Susam-Saraeva

University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/117469688>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8249-0047>

ISNI : <http://www.isni.org/0000000048792765>

BNF : <https://data.bnf.fr/fr/15510866>

Synopsis: Hierarchical vs. horizontal political translation in post-15M Spain

Fruela Fernández

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TEXT

- 1 Over several decades, extended notions of translation that go beyond the strict understanding of interlinguistic translation have become central for a variety of theoretical frameworks and approaches across the humanities and the social sciences. However, politics and political theory are rarely taken into account when discussing these extended understandings of translation. This is particularly striking if we consider both the rich corpus of this tradition—with highly influential thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci (cf. Boothman, 2010, Lacorte, 2010) and Judith Butler (2000)—and the recent surge and popularization of the concept of translation in activist circles. To address this gap, I follow a line of analysis that derives from my most recent monograph, *Translating the Crisis* (Fernández, 2020), which studied the importance of translation—as both a linguistic and conceptual practice—in the 2011 Spanish movement known as “15M” or “indignados” and its political aftermath.
- 2 The political and cultural atmosphere that emerged in Spain after the 15M was decisively shaped by translation practices. This is expressed, for instance, in the high number of translations released by politically committed publishers, the visibility and status of translated intellectuals such as Silvia Federici and David Harvey, and the adoption of key political concepts such as *comunes* and *cuidados* that have been shaped through complex processes of translation. This drive has also been expressed in the use of translation as a political concept by a number of activists and political representatives from the new leftist organizations, notably in the case of Podemos, a party that was created in 2015 as a response to the 15M demands but that has had a rather complex and tense relationship with the movement, as well as

with other political groups. It is worth noting that an important section of Podemos initial cadres were academics in the fields of politics and sociology; this might have played a role in the adoption of these uses of translation, which bear the imprint of thinkers such as Gramsci, Butler, Bauman and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Fernández, 2020, p. 107–128).

- 3 In this article, I address the opposition between what I call *hierarchical* and *horizontal* political translation. Both usages are based around a similar point of departure: the language of mainstream politics and the language of the ‘common people’ are so strongly and profoundly separated that any meaningful interaction between them needs to be based upon practices of translation. Across my fieldwork, I have studied how left-wing politicians, activists and citizens in post-15M Spain frequently resort to this extended notion of translation to highlight the divide between institutional politics—or other key sources of power such as finance and the media—and general citizens. Furthermore, some of these practices involve what I call “political exposure”: the person who understands the official message and translates does not only aim to expose this divide, but also to reveal a hidden ideological reality that the original message aimed to conceal. These practices are thus epistemologically relevant for at least two main reasons: first, they imply that political intervention requires the possession of a certain knowledge (in this case, familiarity with the different languages); second, they demonstrate that translation is decisively enmeshed within relations of power, as the act of decoding and recoding places translators in a political position, either as mediators between institutions and citizens or as dissenters that challenge messages produced by these institutions.
- 4 Despite their similarities, there is a clear distinction between uses of translation that I call “hierarchical” and those that are “horizontal”, with both epistemological and political implications. Hierarchical translation happens top-down and is generally based on a subtle distinction between those who ‘understand’ (critical intellectuals, leftist politicians) and those who do not (general citizens). This is a trope that has reappeared frequently in the discourse of Podemos cadres, who legitimize their role as political representatives in terms of their ability to translate. For instance, Íñigo Errejón—one of

Podemos' leading figures until his departure in 2019—claimed that an intellectual is “eminently a translator” who “has the duty and the ability to take abstract concepts and translate them” (Errejón, interviewed in Soto-Trillo, 2015). In a similar vein, Pablo Iglesias, Podemos' General Secretary until 2021, argued that political communication is “a pivotal work of translation: to transform your diagnosis into a discourse that people can understand” (Iglesias, interviewed in Guedán, 2016, p. 120). Finally, philosopher Germán Cano (2015, p. 196) praised Iglesias for his ability to translate “technocratic jargon” into “a simpler” language that is accessible to everyone. These arguments place the emphasis on the mediating or even gate-keeping role of intellectuals and politicians, based on their acquired knowledge: citizens are placed in the passive role of receiving translations generated by these mediators; the possibility that they might also have translational ability is never addressed.

- 5 By contrast, horizontal translation happens when the translator does not speak in the name of any collective : he or she simply demonstrates the ability to translate politically when confronted by an institutional message. To be sure, this demonstration of ability involves a claim to be in possession of a given knowledge: in order to decode institutional language, one needs to have mastered its fundamental features. However, this claim is not made at the expense of other subjects and forms of knowledge: the translator only questions the political validity of the original, without preventing the emergence of other translations. The political and epistemological implications of this practice are completely different: the translator does not establish a political hierarchy based on knowledge (or its perceived absence), nor does he/she derive a position of power or privilege from this knowledge.
- 6 Examples of horizontal translation can be harder to find because of the typical settings in which they take place—they rarely happen within those prestigious genres that favor political representatives, such as interviews or books—and because of their radical departure from standard notions of translation. As many of my examples (mostly taken from social media) show, citizens invoking their right to translate a given institutional message tend to fully decouple denotative and connotative meaning: what the original text ‘says’ at its most basic level bears little resemblance to what the translation proposes.

What matters for these citizen-translators is the emergence and revelation of a secondary set of meanings and suggestions that they assume many people would fail to see under the surface of the original statement. At the same time, the traditional relationship between ‘author’ and ‘translator’ is completely reversed: the potential intentions of the author of the original utterance are disregarded, as the translator sets out to emphasize his or her understanding of the message and its implications.

- 7 This horizontal practice of translation has played a notable role in the opposition and criticism of concepts generated by companies and ‘gurus’ to mask an undesired reality, a debate that has peaked in recent years with the emergence of numerous neologisms for new working conditions. After the coinage of the word *trabacaciones*—a portmanteau of *trabajo* (“work”) and *vacaciones* (“holidays”) that translates the English neologism *workcation*—many Twitter users reacted critically, with one user (Jorge(r), 2018) claiming it should be actually translated as “exploitation of labor” (*explotación laboral*). The translation does not only break the linguistic relationship between source and target, but it also reverses the ideological discourse around concepts: the neoliberal allure of the original, with its promise of combining work and pleasure, is presented in a crude and negative light in the translation.
- 8 In their affinities and differences, these extended understandings of translation need to be understood within the context of the 15M ‘atmosphere’ and, particularly, in connection with an issue that the movement brought to the fore: the critique of the system of expertise upon which contemporary democracies are based. This is a key point where epistemology and politics interact, as decision-making decisively depends upon knowledge: how it is defined, who has legitimate access to it, and how the power that derives from it is stratified. While politicians from the ‘new’ left, with their espousal of hierarchical translation, are merely proposing an improved system of experts, other activists and citizens are defending, through their practices of horizontal translation, a horizontal conception of politics in which political and professional categories are contested rather than enforced.

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AUTHOR

Fruela Fernández

University of the Balearic Islands, Spain

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/185606903>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4349-6195>

ISNI : <http://www.isni.org/0000000115706530>

BNF : <https://data.bnf.fr/fr/16674286>

Synopsis: The translational turn in narrative medicine: A study of Margherita Guidacci's *Neurosuite*

Marta Arnaldi

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TEXT

- 1 In this essay, I invoke a translational turn in narrative medicine. My argument is grounded in two primary considerations: first, that illness is a fundamentally estranging experience resembling that of speaking a foreign language, and second, that discourses of and around health and disease have been dominated by narrative paradigms that have failed to capture the essentially translational (as in foreign and foreignizing) speech, or lack thereof, of those who suffer. This argument challenges the master plot of illness as narrative in favour of a disruptive idea of illness as translation.
- 2 To support my argument, I proceed as follows. First, I make a case for reimagining narrative medicine as translation by developing the idea that illness is essentially foreignizing. I then outline and discuss the features of narrative medicine's revisited, translational design by analyzing an exemplary case of translational epistemology of health and disease *avant la lettre*: Margherita Guidacci's *Neurosuite* (1999a). This is a collection of 80 poems recounting the poet-patient's experience of incarceration in a psychiatric hospital, patterns of (un)communication with health providers, as well as the obscured, 'opaque' forms of psychiatric knowledge brought about by suffering.
- 3 Written by a woman in a non-anglophone language (Italian) and context (twentieth-century Italy), these poems shed light on the peripheries of narrative medicine, a discipline that, in addition to being dominated by a narratological reasoning that neglects "other modes of reflecting upon and representing experience" (Woods, 2011, p. 202), has remained largely Anglocentric (Wilson, 2023; Arnaldi & Forsdick,

2023). Analyzing these poems through the lens of translation studies enables me to connect the poet-patient's experience of illness with ideas of foreignization against the triply non-normative background of Guidacci's non-English, non-narrative, and woman's perspective. The chosen psychiatric context thus highlights a further element of marginalization and estrangement (Yakeley et al., 2014; Arnaldi, 2024). Additionally, it provides an ideal setting for discussing the dynamics of narrativization, and lack thereof, in that consultation—a narrative-based process by definition—lies at the heart of psychiatric diagnosis and treatment.

- 4 Together, Guidacci's poems offer a synthesis of the many ways in which a translational turn in narrative medicine may bring into focus and under the same lens the very values that inform the discipline, from its focus on ethics to its patient-oriented vision of healing. The poems also disclose how translation is inherently a self-critical concept and practice that invites us to question our beliefs and values, including the assumption that translating is always beneficial and harmless. As the analysis presented in this article demonstrates, there are times when we are called upon to preserve the incommunicable and the untranslatable as ethical and just forms of knowledge, especially in contexts of psychiatric suffering. This novel reading of Guidacci's *Neurosuite* enriches our current understanding of her poetry as "highly spiritual" (Wood, 2005) to underscore the fundamentally therapeutic dimension of faith as a form of healing, as well as the role of translation as a way of engaging with the Other by definition, that is God.
- 5 I conclude by outlining the principles at the basis of a translational epistemology, including forms of epistemic obscurity, untranslatability and silence. I suggest that these principles can be deployed to study non-narrative accounts of illness which often take the form of poetic communication and lyrical storytelling. In this analysis, Guidacci's poetry takes us "to the centre of the night" (nel centro della notte) (Guidacci, 1999b, p. 175, my translation). It points to some of the ways in which a translational epistemology, one that privileges non-linear, non-hierarchical, complex and multivocal possibilities of knowledge can contribute to more just theories and practices of narrative medicine and narrative psychiatry, even (and especially) when the task of narrating and understanding those who suffer

seems almost impossible to accomplish. As a medium for understanding non-narrative accounts of illness, translation accounts for the 'black holes' into which psychiatric knowledge may fall, not to celebrate ignorance nor to incite resignation, but rather to accommodate different modes of knowledge, including those produced in the midst of suffering. I therefore invoke a translational turn in narrative medicine, not with the intention to challenge or reinvent narrativity as an episteme, a genre, and a concept, but rather in the hope of foregrounding narrative medicine's essential, translational nature that encompasses all of the above. I believe that concepts from translation studies and the languages of poetry should be systematically incorporated in narrative medicine, its theory, and practices, and I aspire for this article to contribute towards achieving this critical integration.

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AUTHOR

Marta Arnaldi

University of Oxford, UK

IDREF : <https://www.idref.fr/279900120>

ORCID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7048-9807>