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**Corrado Federici**

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**Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl, eds. *Transfiction. Research into the realities of translation fiction*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2014, 373 p.**

As the editors state, the 22 essays that comprise the anthology are derived from papers delivered at the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference on Fictional Translators and Interpreters in Literature and Film, held at the University of Vienna's Centre for Translation Studies, September 14-17, 2011. Klaus Kaindl's fine preface provides a definition for the term *transfiction*: "the introduction and (increased) use of translation-related phenomena in fiction" (p. 4). He also gives the reader a useful overview of the history of the appearance of translators or interpreters as figures in literature—from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century—and in cinema. Karlheinz Spitzl, for his part, justifies the arrangement of the essays into four sections, which the editors call *episodes*, titled: "Entering theoretical territories," "Travelling through intercultural space," "Experiencing agency and action," and "Carrying function into effect." The sections are equally interesting in that they weave together seamlessly discussions on literary theory, philosophy, translation theory, and the practices of translation and interpretation. Additionally, Spitzl writes a concise summary for each of the book's chapters, as well as an interesting concluding comment on the complex relationships among fiction, nonfiction, and translation.

The number and variety of novels, short stories, and films analyzed in the collection's chapters are quite impressive, as is the geographic and linguistic scope of the texts studied. The materials

examined by the book's contributors (indicated in parentheses) are produced by authors and filmmakers from Africa (Karlheinz Spitzl, Alice Leal), English Canada (Sabine Strümper-Krobb), France (Dörte Andres, Nitsa Ben-Ari, Brian James Baer, Sigrid Kupsch-Losereit), Germany (Renate Resch, Daniela Beuren), Italy (Giovanni Nadiani), Latin America (Rosemary Arrojo), Québec (Klaus Kaindl, Patricia Godbout), Russia (Natalia Olshanskaya), Scotland (Michelle Woods), Serbia (Marija Todorova), the United Kingdom (Salam Al-Mahadin, Alice Cesarini, Ingrid Kurz), and the United States (Fotini Apostolou, Waltraud Kolb). Also represented in the monograph is the field of science-fiction (Monika Wozniak). The collected contributions illustrate effectively both the popularity and the global reach of the motif of the translator and the interpreter in fiction and cinema. Equally diversified are the historical and social contexts within which the characters operate, that is, from post-apartheid South Africa, and Holocaust Germany, to Israel in 1948, and the European Union. In these works, the figures of the translator and interpreter are cast in a variety of roles, ranging from minor character to protagonist. In her contribution, Ben-Ari offers the reader a very useful typology of four types of novels that contain representations of translators and interpreters: "The first type comprises belated post-colonial novels from the periphery [...]. The second type is that of Post-structural novels where fiction is but an excuse for representing intertext and 'death of the Author' theories [...]. The third type comprises best-sellers that have discovered the advantages of using the interpreter as protagonist [...]. The fourth and last type comprises parodies that can no longer take the subject seriously [...]" (p. 114-116).

What is especially interesting is the fact that many issues that have come to the fore in translation theory discussions are explored in a fictional, rather than a strictly theoretical, context. These include such questions as fidelity, explored in, for example, Kurz's chapter, "On the (in)fidelity of (fictional) interpreters;" the relationship between source text and target text, found in Apostolou's essay "Walter Benjamin revisited;" between interpretation and translation, which is treated in Al-Mahadin's "Language, essence and silence;" the public's perception of the role of the translator and interpreter, as in Spitzl's chapter "Taking care of the stars" and Olshanskaya's "From a faltering bystander to a

spiritual leader: Re-thinking the role of the translators in Russia,” and, finally, the translator’s or interpreter’s own perception of his or her work, a perspective investigated in Ben-Ari’s essay “Reaching a dead-end—and then?”

Other topics of interest arising from the interdisciplinary reflections include the ethics of the interpreter, as in Godbout’s “Fictional translators in Québec novels;” the “transparency” or “invisibility” of the translator in Ben-Ari’s contribution (cited above); the politicization of the practice of translation, discussed in Olshanskaya’s essay; translation as a form of meaning-making, as in Leal’s “Truth in translation: Interpreters’ subjectivity in the truth and reconciliation hearings in South Africa” as well as in Arrojo’s essay, “The power of fiction as theory;” autobiography versus fiction, the topic of Todorova’s chapter titled “Interpreting conflict,” and pseudo-translation (see, for instance, Kupsch-Losereit’s essay “Pseudotranslations in 18th-century France), and, finally, the current working conditions of professional translators and interpreters, discussed by Nadiani in his chapter “From *La dolce vita* to *La vita agra*: The image of the Italian literary translator as an illusory, rebellious and precarious intellectual.”

From this discourse emerge several metaphors characterizing the activity, from the translator as Charon, the ferryman of classical mythology, to the translator as a dragon that is strong but persecuted and silenced, both figures appearing in Kaindl’s contribution titled “Of dragons and translators: Foreignness as a principle of life. Yoko Tawada’s ‘St. George and the Translator’,” and the translator or interpreter as “transcultural broker,” cited by Spitzl in his chapter “Taking care of the stars.” The act of translation itself is also cast as a form of cannibalism, a metaphor that appears in Arrojo’s contribution.

The growing interest in this topic is explained by several of the contributors in terms of the phenomena of post-colonialism and globalization, where the issues of identity, hybridity, and alterity are foregrounded in cultural theory and in society in general. For example, Apostolou claims, with some justification, that translation has become an important trope to represent the condition of the modern subject who “is left suspended in a world of non-belonging, which has translated everything into mere empty signifiers, void of meaning” (p. 70).

It must be noted that when conference proceedings or papers developed from presentations at conferences are published a certain amount of overlap and repetition is unavoidable. To illustrate, reference to the frequent presence of translators and interpreters in literature and film is made by several of the volume contributors, including Andres, Baer, Ben-Ari, Kurz, and Resch. The same can be said for the reference to the increased interest in this phenomenon on the part of translation studies scholars, as we see in Kaindl's "Going fictional," and Baer's "Interpreting Daniel Stein: Or what happens when fictional translators get translated," and to Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator," which is cited by Apostolou and Kaindl, for example. However, given the strengths of the collection, these are mere quibbles.

Overall, the book offers many excellent features, not the least of which are the scope and range of the contributions. To quote Spitzl: "The volume in your hands offers no string of beads; it is rather a swirling collection of a multitude of approaches, perspectives and insights, which can—when put in motion (*lecture*)—turn into a vivid kaleidoscope" (p.27). The editors of *Transfiction* are to be commended for providing a vehicle for critical observations on the works of such canonical writers as Cervantes, Borges, Voltaire, Conan Doyle, and Kafka, as well as on the fiction produced by professional translators and interpreters who reflect on the problems, limitations, and possibilities of their craft. This fine anthology deals with a phenomenon in literature and film that has important implications for Translation Studies.

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**Sergey Tyulenev. *Applying Luhmann to Translation Studies*. London and New York, Routledge, «Routledge Advances in Translation Studies», 2012, 235 p.**

Depuis une vingtaine d'années, les études descriptives (DTS) n'ont cessé d'emprunter à la sociologie. Parallèlement à celles de Pierre Bourdieu, d'Anthony Giddens et de Bruno Latour (pour ne citer que quelques noms), les idées de Niklas Luhmann se sont taillé une place grâce aux travaux d'Andreas Poltermann, de Theo Hermans, de Hans Vermeer et, plus récemment, de Sergey Tyulenev. L'objectif du présent ouvrage consiste à appliquer