



**John Milton and Paul Bandia, eds. *Agents of Translation*.
Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2009, 337 p.**

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John Milton and Paul Bandia, eds. *Agents of Translation*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2009, 337 p.

The concept of “agency” is at the center of the discussions presented in this book. Using the umbrella term “agents of translation,” the authors shed light on the role of networks of social actors, journals, publishing houses, translators, and patrons in the production of cultural repertoires via translation.

“Agency” is considered in two ways. The first one refers to agents “who have effected changes in styles of translation, have broadened the range of translations available, or who have helped or attempted to innovate by selecting new works to be translated” (p. 2). Outi Paloposki presents two case studies in which translation agency is defined against a backdrop of editorial and financial constraints in Finland at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th. Cemal Demircioğlu reflects on the “provocative figure” (p. 131) of Ahmed Midhat during the Turkish *Tanzimat*. His analysis of paratextual materials reveals some of the textual practices related to translation—“conveying,” “borrowing,” “stolen text,” “dialogue,” “summary,” “conversion,” “emulation/imitation” (p. 153)—in late 19th-century Turkey and, by doing so, takes the analysis of translation practices beyond the source text–target text dichotomy.

Denise Merkle examines an agent of translation—the publishing industry—that is held responsible for the maintenance of moral codes and is expected to act as a conventional “spokesperson” of 19th-century England; failing to do so can be fateful, as it was for publisher Henry Vizetelly. Carol O’Sullivan portrays the opposite case: Henry Bohn’s “Libraries.” The author shows how Bohn managed to translate “within the margin” (p. 107) and to circumvent Victorian censorship without compromising the construction of “a canon of world literature” (p. 108). In her article, Lisa Rose Bradford studies the production of “a translational discursive genre” by 20th-century Argentine poets, and their attempt to create a “panhispanic discourse” through their translations (p. 245). Thelma Nobrega and John Milton give a detailed account of the revolutionary translational activities of Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, “who have deeply changed the translation status” in 20th-century Brazil (p. 275). The contribution of Francis R. Jones discusses the translation of post-war Bosnian poetry through “networks of agents,” and gives an alternative view of the location of networks and of the loyalty of translators to a cultural space (p. 301).

“Agency” is also considered from the point of view of “the political and cultural role of the agent of translation” (p. 2). In this second set of articles, translational activities are linked to political and cultural movements. Georges Bastin focuses on early 19th-century Venezuela, where Francisco de Miranda “sees translation as a weapon for social emancipation” (p. 39). His study gives an excellent portrait not only of Miranda’s translational activities, but also of the importance of translation in the Latin-American independence movements. Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar uncovers “the interactions among politics, culture and the personal history behind the turbulent career of a cultural agent” (p. 162) in order to reveal “the complex nature of his cultural agency” (p. 185). The translation of “cultural paradigms” via the *Revue Britannique* in Brazil is carefully examined by Maria Ramicelli, who concludes that Brazilian narrators used translation to convey “cultural aspects that *should characterize an authentic Brazilian identity*” (p. 58, Ramicelli’s italics). In their articles, Akiko Uchiyama and Paul Bandia focus on the representations of the “Other” produced by translators. Uchiyama studies how Fukuzawa Yukichi (Japan)

produced a representation of China and Africa through Western eyes. Bandia presents the struggle of Anta Diop (Senegal) against cultural misrepresentations and his attempts to correct them via translation. Christine Zurbach examines how translation, reading, rewriting and performing merged in the construction of a theater repertoire in 20th-century Portugal.

Agents of Translation succeeds not only in portraying a multicultural Translation Studies field, but also in bringing forward the role of agents of translation in different historical contexts. One of the strong points of the book is to put forward an enlarged notion of “the translator” and “translation.” Putting these two notions into perspective allows the reader to reflect on the different modalities of translational agency. Considering “networks” is another highlight. I would even say this is required for the kind of studies included in the volume, since it balances out nicely the attention given to individual agents who, otherwise, would become the heroic characters of biographical narratives. Most of the authors are thus sensitive to this risk and justify on socio-historical grounds the attention given to individual agents when the case study requires it. The title of Tahir-Gürçağlar’s paper, “A Cultural Agent against the Forces of Culture,” reflects accurately the often paradoxical position of the individual with respect to his or her cultural space. The textual analysis provided by some of the authors is another strong point. It allows for articulating the micro and macro dimensions from a Translation Studies perspective.

To sum up, these articles respond to recent developments in Translation Studies, which call for an enlarged notion of translation, the consideration of contexts other than the European, and the examination of the role of translation in historical and social processes. The book is a very enjoyable read and a valuable contribution to multicultural and socio-historical Translation Studies research.

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