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Taivalkoski-Shilov, Kristiina and Ponchanal, Bruno (eds) (2022). *Traduire les voix de la nature / Translating the Voices of Nature*. Montréal: Éditions québécoises de l'œuvre (collection Vita Traductiva), pp. 233, 27,95$ (print version) / 24,95$ (electronic version). ISBN 978-2-924337-15-8 (print version) / ISBN 978-2-924337-16-5 (electronic version).

The book contributes to a growing body of work in posthumanism (Braidotti, deLanda — see Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2013) and eco-criticism (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) within the humanities which seeks to find ways for scholars to actively contribute to a more sustainable, post-anthropocentric world view that promotes humans' entanglement with nature and contests the old binary of a dominant "mankind" versus a submissive nature. In the last decade eco-translation, which entails the study of the relationship between translation/translators and the environment, has emerged as a sub-field of posthumanism. While there are different notions of eco-translation (Scott 2015; Badenes and Coisson 2015; Cronin 2017; also see You 2022: 4-6 for an overview), in her introduction, Taivalkoski-Shilov specifically situates *Translating the Voices of Nature* within the tradition of Cronin's *Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene* (2017). Cronin defines eco-translation as "all forms of translation thinking and practice that knowingly engage with the challenges of human-induced environmental change" (2017: 2) and acknowledges that translation "in its 'more enlightened mode offered the possibility of a voice for the oppressed'" (Cronin qtd. in Taivalkoski-Shilov 2022: 8).

Cronin describes translation as a decidedly political endeavour which is entangled with and often complicit with the rampant consumerism and extractivism of globalisation and digitisation. Eco-translation, in Cronin's sense, entails a call for action, for the reassessment of translators' agency and an acceptance of social responsibility (Cronin 2017, see also Cronin 2019). Taivalkoski-Shilov (5-6) further refers to Koskinen's (2010) demand for Translation Studies to become more socially engaged and aware. Acknowledging the agency of the translator is empowering. Nevertheless, taking responsibility also entails the need to go beyond academia, demonstrating, on the one hand, the relevance of translation *per se* and Translation Studies in particular, to society, and, on the other hand, assuming an active role in restituting agency and voice to the natural world as far as this is possible within a posthumanist worldview constrained by the human condition.

Translating the Voices of Nature answers to Cronin's and Koskinen's call for action for the former, and takes significant steps towards the latter. With its collection of eight essays which are arranged around four themes, the book covers the voices of nature in a broad range of texts and their

translations, from 19th-century Swiss prose to early 20th-century Japanese poetry, from European fairy tales and their adaptations to North-American animal stories and environmental texts, and demonstrates what translation and its careful analysis can do. The texts at the centre of the individual chapters – Kamo no Chōmei's *Hōjōki* (Kato), Gottfried Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (Fontanet), de Beaumont's *La Belle et la Bête* and Angela Carter's adaptations (Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère), Charles Foster's *Being a Beast* (Poncharal), Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (Taivalkoski-Shilov), Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known* (Whitfield), science journalism (Karwacka) and nature documentaries (Desblache) – are all well-known works with a wide, often global, reach, albeit generated predominantly by and for Western or First World translators/readers. Nevertheless, analysing the impact of translation on their reception is an important contribution to understanding the agency of the translator.

Many of the chapters are inspiring to read, offering a fresh perspective not only on matters of translation but also on the translated texts they discuss. Through the careful comparative analysis of the source and target texts, the authors reveal the importance of translation and the impact a loss of detail or shift in nuance can have on how the work is received. As Taivalkoski-Shilov demonstrates in her chapter, this is particularly important in influential works such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). Taivalkoski-Shilov compares two Finnish translations of Carson's book, a journalistic translation which was published in 1963 in a major Finnish newspaper, and a book translation which appeared 7 years later. Taivalkoski-Shilov also analyses the para-texts which accompanied and framed the translations and had a significant impact on how the book itself and Carson as scientist and author were perceived. Taivalkoski-Shilov reveals the political dimensions of translation and the significant power of the translator and the publisher to influence the reception of a text and its author, which can even go as far as undermining the authority of the latter.

Para-texts are also at the centre of Daniela Kato's chapter which discusses the joint translation of the 12th century Japanese poem *Hōjōki* which was conducted by Frederick Victor Dickins and Kumagusu Minakata at the beginning of the 20th century. Kato addresses questions of hierarchy and the responsibility of the translator with regard to decolonisation, thinking through how other cultures relate to nature and how this relationship can be translated from one culture into another. Part of her chapter is dedicated to the substantial translator's commentary produced by Minakata. Kato discusses the politicalness of the para-text, concluding that for Minakata it was a way to frame his translation as "a form of environmental responsibility towards his own place and time" (43).

Both Kato and Taivalkoski-Shilov discuss translation in relation to intentional manipulation with a political or personal purpose. While some

scholars of eco-translation go as far as promoting the active "manipulation of texts according to [their] own agenda" (Badenes and Coisson 2015: 365), such outright manipulation is not endorsed by the contributors to *Translating the Voices of Nature.* Rather, their aim lies in exposing the power of manipulation, which is, to some degree always inherent in translation.

Several of the volume's chapters explore the pitfalls of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism (Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Whitfield, Poncharal, Karwacka), where the voices of animals or of nature are subsumed by the noisy interpretation of the human. An interesting lexico-semantic debate, weaving at times unwittingly through several chapters in this book, may serve to illustrate the inevitably anthropocentric subject position of writer and translator alike, and this is apparent in the seemingly innocuous translation of 18th-century Leprince de Beaumont's *bête* as *beast* in Angela Carter's successive re-translations, or of Charles Foster's book title *Being a Beast* (2016) to Thierry Piélat's *Dans la peau d'une bête* (2017). In his analysis of the latter, Poncharal highlights in this volume how epistemic perspectives reflected in different languages can contribute in translation to shifts along the anthropocentric continuum. For example, argues Poncharal, while *beast/bête* is associated both in English and French with "negative qualities: brutality, ferocity of a human, stupidity" (106; our translation), the negative association in English tends more towards the dangerous side of wild animals, whereas in French it tends more towards a lack of intelligence. Poncharal (115) goes on to consider Foster's statement that "I want to have a more articulate talk with the *land*", translated by Piélat as "J'aspire à avoir un dialogue plus clair avec la *terre*" (our emphasis). Referring at first to Foster's *land* as *paysage* (115), nouns we might translate back into English as *landscape* or *countryside* rather than *land*, Poncharal highlights the patent lack of equivalence in French for the polysemy of the English *land* and postulates that "the morphosyntactic malleability of English was more capable of matching the animal subjectivities [of Foster's book] and of erasing the animal-human boundaries – in brief, of returning to nature its full "agentivité" (agency) [sic]" (120; our translation).

The problematic of Western languages' (in)ability to convey an ecocentric notion of land capable of reflecting nature's agency may be found in comparing the treatment of the German "offenes Land" (which one might translate from the source context as "open fields") in a passage from *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,* a work by 19th-century author Gottfried Keller. Both idioms imply a human-centred notion of cultivation, even in its absence as determined by the qualifying adjectives "offenes/open". In this volume, one can analyse Fontanet's comparison of six translations and re-translations of this selected passage where Keller's expression is rendered variously in the French pastoral genre as "riantes campagnes" (Guillaume), "campagnes rieuses" (Chardon), or as the more literal but foreignising

"campagne découverte" (Hella/Bournac) / "campagnes découvertes" (Robin), or "terres découvertes" (Gidon), while a hint of nostalgia for the French Revolution might be read into "la libre campagne" (Walter). In all versions, then, a domesticated *countryside* (*campagne*) — domesticated in both Venuti's sense and in the sense of human dominion over nature — is the preferred translation for the German *Land*, and this rendition is further anthropomorphised as *laughing* (*riantes*, *rieuses*) or *free* (*libre*), while neither distortion is present in Keller's source text. In the third Keller passage selected by Fontanet, the German "weit in die Gegend", which in its immediate context might translate as "far across the land", is rendered as "au loin dans la plaine" (Guillaume; Chardon), "très loin, dans la vallée" (Hella/Bournac), "dans le pays" (Gidon), "au loin dans le pays" (Walter) and "très loin dans la vallée" (Robin). The German *Gegend* is thus rendered in French interchangeably as a plain, a valley, or more generally the countryside (*pays*) — though the French *pays,* from which *paysan*, or peasant is derived, represents a shift from the source by being rooted in land but also signifying country as nation, with its connotations of statehood and sovereignty. The notion of land is thus permuted into the very different topological referents of plain and valley in some of the foregoing translations, implying the relative insignificance accorded to the accurate representation of Keller's *Gegend* by his translators, while the very human-centred notions of cultivation are allied to nationhood as implied by the word *pays*.

Agency (*agentivité*) is also denied natural elements by writer and translators alike, though the latter apply a more domesticating shift to Keller's "Der Fluß zog" (The river flowed; our translation), for example. Where Keller as omniscient writer co-opts the river as metaphor for the fate, destiny and resolve of his star-crossed lovers, all but one translator applied the imperfect tense in their French versions. Robin's passé simple (*traversa — crossed*) offers a closer equivalent to the German praeterite in directly attributing the action to the narrated subject, while adopting the imperfect tense in French relegates the river to the more passive role of context or setting for the omniscient narrator.

One might argue that the linguistic intricacies of translating notions of beast, land or countryside, or the finer points of subject and tense in translation, are simply part and parcel of the translator's task with respect to the sociocultural contingencies of lexis and literary style in source and target. But the centrality of the referents for words pertaining to the natural world and its constituents, such as they must transpire to signify as agentive subjects in the post-Anthropocene, acquires, as argued by Poncharal, a fundamental epistemological dimension in the endeavour to write and translate the voices of nature. In this respect, the translation of indigenous perspectives of animals, the land and the natural environment constitutes a *sine qua non* of eco-translation in the face of the continuing threat to their survival, which might result in the potential loss of a

pluriverse of historic *Weltanschauung* rooted in nature that modern society might be incapable of tapping in any other way (Cámara-Leret and Bascompte 2021; Jessen et al 2022).

Presenting the results of a study conducted with students of advanced translation, Karwacka suggests that there is a tendency for translators to anthropomorphise even where the original text aims for a more neutral language or prioritises the agency of the animal/nature. However, Karwacka also sees a positive side to anthropomorphic language: while it "perpetuates the human/animal binary and emphasizes the central position of humans, [it] may also be used to overcome anthropocentrism […] and show how human and non-human animals share objectively observed characteristics, such as pain, social interactions and playfulness" (186).

While several of the chapters explore the voices of animals and how these can be rendered through language, e.g. the use of onomatopoeia by Seton (see Whitfield) or Foster (see Poncharal), the final chapter by Lucile Desblache takes us beyond the linguistic realm into intersemiotic translation. By exploring the affordances of music to express the voices of nature in a way that can be accessible to humans from a less anthropomorphic or anthropocentric position, she demonstrates how non-linguistic translation can be an enriching extension to linguistic translation that "can broaden our understanding of translation as well as communication and language, in ways that are essential in the 21st century" (208). With its move away from the linguistic, Desblache's chapter is perhaps the most successful contribution in the volume when it comes to attaining a less anthropocentric translation practice.

As we have shown above, this bilingual edited volume offers a timely posthumanist contribution to the most recent turn in Translation Studies, spearheaded by Cronin (2017, 2019) and giving voice to Rosi Braidotti's (2013, 2019) call to adjust contemporary thought in preparation for a post-Anthropocene era that is fast approaching, whether or not humanity succeeds in mitigating the looming climate disaster. In her introduction to the book, Taivalkoski-Shilov refers to Guy Midgley's warning not to spread doom about the irreversibility of climate change but to give hope and motivation to make change possible and save what is left of our planet (4). The contributors to *Translating the Voices of Nature* seem to have taken this to heart and the book goes some way towards generating hope for a better, less extractive engagement with nature and with the voices of others.

Taivalkoski-Shilov defines voice as a "polysemous and complex concept having both metaphorical and non-metaphorical meanings" (8) that encompasses writing, discourse, sounds, social and subject positions, extending it to multimodal forms of communication other than sound present in human and non-human communication (e.g. gesture, touch).

This resonates with a core aspect of Braidotti's argument regarding the matter of ethics: the recognition of material difference and an eschewing of facile postmodern notions of diversity, which entails not only a recognition of difference between humans but also of difference between humans and animals, plants, and all manifestations of the animate and inanimate world we share with other species. Cronin's *Eco-Translation* (2017: 76-85) advocates the cultivation of empathy by giving voice to the Other, which includes giving voice and agency to the animal subject and the environment. The preservation of the environment, in turn, is inextricably linked to the preservation of knowledge encoded in indigenous languages, a fact recognized by the United Nations proclamation of 2022–2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (https://en.unesco.org/idil2022-2032). A fruitful companion to Taivalkoski-Shilov and Poncharal's ground-breaking volume might explore how epistemological insights afforded by indigenous cultural heritage, whether transmitted orally, in writing, or in multimodal artefacts, might further inform the task of translating the voices of nature.

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