Notions of place, language fragments and sites of translation

Mike Baynham & Tong King Lee. *Translation and Translanguaging*. London: Routledge, 2019. 208 pp.

Susannah Radstone & Rita Wilson, eds. *Translating Worlds. Migration, Memory, and Culture*. London: Routledge, 2020. 188 pp.

Sherry Simon. *Translation Sites, A Field Guide*. London: Routledge, 2019. 294 pp.

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At a time when identity is increasingly fragmented – not necessarily a bad thing – through blurring of borders in terms of gender, location, and affiliation to space, culture, and language, several books have been published that study the sociocultural aspects of identity formation through the lens of translation in order to transcend existing spatial and temporal borders and to highlight shared associations within the diverse spaces humans occupy.

The books under review here relate to translation in those diverse spaces, physical as well as linguistic ones, that stretch beyond barriers of time, space, and language. Sherry Simon relates translation to fragmentation by tracing the spatial and diachronic lines that converge in polyglot urban spaces. Baynham and Lee reflect on how the discourse fragments that occur in translanguaging relate to institutions and applications of translation, while Radstone and Wilson deal with the fragmentation that emerges in the relationship between translation, migration, and memory.

Polyglot spaces and competing versions of history

In *Translation Sites. A Field Guide*, Sherry Simon (University of Concordia) builds on previous works (2006, 2012) in which she explored the linguistic fluidity of urban landscapes, and the way in which changes over time are reflected in the city's physical environment. These changes highlight the dynamic power of trans-

lation around sites and symbols in cosmopolitan and plurilingual cities such as Montreal. In *Translation Sites* Simon examines more than a dozen such sites in cities (e.g., Cairo, Lviv, and Montreal) and other settings (e.g., Ellis Island, Mostar Bridge, and a Japanese garden in Ireland) where "words and histories meet," sites that "are shaped by conversations across languages" (1). These conversations also include silences, missed rendezvous and exchanges across time and space.

> I offer hotels, markets, museums, checkpoints and border zones. To follow my routes is to visit gardens, bridges and streets where languages compose ever-changing palimpsests and where spaces are charged with the tension between here and elsewhere. It is to visit places whose cultural meanings are shaped by language traffic and by the clash of memories.   (2)

To visit these polyglot places is "to experience competing versions of history" (1). This immediately calls forth expectations in relation to a contested past, or pasts, that no longer corresponds with the present. The introduction, for instance, links this endeavor with discussions of colonial experiences (8) and Primo Levi's experiences of multilingualism and translation politics in Auschwitz (7).

Simon's book contains 18 chapters divided into five sections: Architectures of Memory, Transit, Crossroads, Thresholds and Borders, Controls, Surveillance. Most chapters are driven by one specific location, be it a specific point in space or a more abstract or plural entity, such as the periphery of the Empire, in the last chapter, "The Edge of Empire."

In her introduction, as well as in Section 2.4, "The Hotel," Simon refers to Marc Augé, whose 1995 *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Modernity* questions the relationship between space and modernity in reaction to contemporary practices that have skewed existing notions of locality and place. Like Augé's 'non-places,' Simon's translation sites are transitory places, spaces or venues that claim their identity through historical relationships, on the one hand, and through social and cultural connections, on the other. A fine example of this can be found in "the lost sound of sidewalks," which resonates with Ruskin's "stones that speak" (after *Stones of Venice*, 1853) (4, 30). These sites, extending across several diachronic layers, situate translation at the core of interlingual exchange "in the everyday life of today's citizens" (5). These places can be not only social or individual, but also non-places, such as transitory sites or sites of passing and physical transfer (e.g., transport terminals, hotels, and supermarkets). Simon takes the non-place on board and, in fact, reinvigorates the concept by making it equally crucial to translation, and much more relational on a social and individual level.

In her chapter "The Monument (Architectures of Memory)," Simon provides a compelling description of the successive layers that make up the history of Lviv,

a city (now part of Ukraine) that has repeatedly seen its name translated (into German, Russian, Polish, and Yiddish) over the course of its troubled political history. Simon approaches Lviv as a polylingual city struggling to preserve memory as a result of the massive extermination of its population that occurred during the Second World War. Simon's gaze explores the memorial Space of Synagogues, which aims "to inscribe Jewish history into the urban fabric" (22). The memorial consists of 39 stone tablets, not unlike tombstones, but imprinted with images and quotations that "take visitors on a physical journey as they walk among the stones" (23) while describing the lived experiences of the Holocaust in "German, Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Dutch and French." In addition, English, Hebrew, and Ukrainian translations are provided (23). By translating testimonies from the past, the memorial introduces information into a new place, in time as well as across the city – reviving memories that "have been barred from their past by the imposition of new histories and languages" (25). The memorial as a translation site addresses the question of how a cosmopolitan city can house the memory of a people no longer at home there by "enlarging the community of those who are the holders of memory […] to the new owners of the place, who become participants" (25).

Buzzling urban spaces and the fluid translation moment

Participants in diverse cities also sample from their immediate surroundings, be it giant pulsing advertising signs, the many languages and varieties spoken at a market, or other multilingual interactions. Bustling modern urban spaces not only take different shapes and forms over time but also take different linguistic formations simultaneously: "from the logics of circulation dictated by neoliberal capitalism to the postcolonial rivalries of the island of Hong Kong, from the nesting of language choices to the translanguaging strategies of speakers, languages are embedded in the commercial activities of Chungking Mansions" (Crossroads / The Market, 131). The multitude of discourses there – Bakhtin's heteroglossia – is shaped by commercial interests and trade routes and, just like the knowledge construction of any translation site, the different discourses and fragments of languages – spatially but also over time – co-exist socially and relationally:

> Translations open up routes of commerce and exchange, circulate stories, create the possibilities for coexistence on the streets. But to see the translational nature of objects and places is to be attentive to the shadows of other times and languages.   (2)

In this respect, the translational nature of diverse environments is intimately related to the space of translanguaging, "a space where multilingual individuals integrate social spaces" (Baynham and Lee 2019: 20) by bringing their attitudes, beliefs and ideologies, their cognitive and physical capacities into one coordinated and meaningful performance (Li Wei 2011: 1223). For Simon that performance is represented by a specific or generic site; for Baynham and Lee, this is part of their conceptualization of multilingualism from below (adapted after Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), i.e., a convivial construct of linguistic practice that is inherently linked to the crossing of borders between communities and their individual citizens.

With a background in studying narratives in migrant communities, on the one hand, and linguistic and cultural transformations in diverse neighborhoods in British cities, on the other, Mike Baynham (University of Leeds) highlights socially-situated perspectives on discourse and language use. Resonating with Simon's diverse places of language transit and transfer, Baynham – together with others – published a working paper in 2015 concerning the role of interpreter-mediated interactions for Czech and Slovak Roma migrants in Leeds (Baynham et al.). This working paper was one of several dozen to come out of TLANG (*Translation and Translanguaging*), a project that also informs the volume under review, which is titled *Translation and Translanguaging*[1] and was edited by Baynham and Tong King Lee (University of Hong Kong).[2]

The concept of translanguaging emerged in the 1970s and 1980s from previous umbrella terms such as concurrent language use (Trueba and Barnett-Mizrahi 1979: 99; García and Padilla 1985: 151). Derived from the Welsh *trawsieithu*, the idea initially described pedagogical practices in which the teacher tries to teach in one language and the pupils are allowed to respond in another, or vice versa (Wei 2018: 15). Translanguaging later came into use as a theoretical concept, related to "knowledge construction that goes beyond languages" (Wei 2018: 15). Introduced with an opening dialogue between Baynham and Lee (1–12), *Translation and Translanguaging* aims to provide a conceptual framework for the relationship between translation and translanguaging, which is laid out in two sections. In the first third of the book (1–56), Baynham and Lee explore the nature of translanguaging, paving the way for a study that examines the parallels, over-

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1. For a full list and appreciation of the 38 working papers of TLANG, see the online listing at https://tlang.org.uk/working-papers/. Among the project publications, one of particular interest to *TIS* readers is Creese et al. (2018).

2. In 2013, Lee published *Translating the Multilingual City: Cross-lingual practices and Language Ideology* (Peter Lang), in which he examines multilingual Singapore and the relationship between translation-mediated practice and language ideology there. A 2020 review by Minxhing Wang in *TranscUlturAl* introduces the book and the review by relating it to Sherry Simon's (2012) *Cities in Translation* (Routledge).

laps and divergences between translation and translanguaging. The authors view both concepts in tandem. In support of their rationale, they provide an elaborate overview of the relevant literature, beginning with Jakobson's 1959 typology of translation and with the linguistic conceptualization of repertoire, classically defined as a verbal repertoire (Gumperz and Naim 1960), a set of language varieties "exhibited in the speaking and writing patterns of a speech community" (Fishman 1972: 48). Baynham understands repertoire beyond language(s) as "the converged space where diverse semiotic resources subsist and operate in tandem" (3). Baynham and Lee relate Gumperz's concept of repertoire – "the totality of linguistic resources [...] available to members of particular communities" (Gumperz 1972: 20–21) – to a modernist concept that survived "the fracturing and dislocation of settled and stable notions of place" (18). This polycentricity is conceptualized as "competing centres of normativity to which speakers are required to orient in their communication practices" (19). Aligning the concept of translanguaging with Jakobson's classic tripartite understanding of translation, the authors examine *interlingual translanguaging*, which takes place when the interlocutors draw from repertoires including different languages; *intralingual translanguaging*, which relates to social heteroglossia in "what is commonly construed as the same language" (22); and *intersemiotic translanguaging*, which refers to the practice of using gestures, graphics and so on, in addition to verbal language.

With a focus on activities 'from below' as related to translanguaging, Baynham and Lee reconceptualize translation by extending both the process and the product of translation through a translanguaging turn, which conceives translation as "a creative deployment of resources within the multilingual repertoire" (33). This turn allows for "disaggregating the translation activity into its moment-by-moment unfolding and showing how, at each of these moments, the multilingual repertoire is at play" (33). Here, as well, Jakobson's tripartite taxonomy of translation is used to extend the fundamental heuristic of *source text vs. target text* into a schema that covers sublinguistic variations, on the one hand, and transpositions between verbal and non-verbal modalities, on the other, both amplifying the spatial locus of translation (34). Therefore, the relationship between translanguaging and translation is characterized as one of tensions and synergies between two dynamic language practices – the former able to denote both product and process, the latter process only (33–54). The translanguaging turn highlights the process in translation, the transla*ting*, which involves "dynamic and functionally integrated use of different languages and language varieties" (35). The heuristic model of translation and its directionality between two defined linguistic spheres shapes the space in which the process takes place and the product emerges whereas with translanguaging, language users do not 'shuttle' across different systems but synergize and transform linguistic, cognitive and semiotic

structures and modalities by bringing together different aspects of their personal history, experience and environment (35). With translanguaging, texts emerge from within the intermingling of languages, language varieties and intersemiotic modalities (as opposed to traveling from one delineated site to another). Translanguaging assumes a heterogenous repertoire – Pennycook's vibrant assemblage (36) – to translation: 'source text' and 'target text' morph and represent a space of transition and flux (36). The translanguaging take on translation aims to provide the moment with fluidity, allowing the lines between source and target to become continuous in their purpose, as well as fragmented in the moment. Perspectives from translanguaging can help us to reimagine translation by adding a dimension of de-territorialization, offering an alternative model and creative pathways for translation to move away from the center (35, 43).

Migrating translation and memory across multiple fields

Susannah Radstone (University of South Australia and Monash University) and Rita Wilson (Monash University) also deal with fragmentation and location in their edited work *Translating Worlds: Migration, Memory, and Culture*. The ten chapters of this volume are divided into two parts: "Migrating and Translating Memory across Multiple Fields," and "Translating and Migrating Languages, Ideologies, and Identities." Radstone and Wilson view translation "as a constant, creative, transformative, and ubiquitous act that permeates every space, time, and thought in our everyday lives." Different from Simon and Baynham/Lee in application, but similar in concept, Radstone and Wilson do not see translation as only a targeted or professional activity (xi). *Translating Worlds* deliberately aims to extend the more traditional reach of translation to encompass complex and multi-layered processes that include conversations and connections between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between the migrants' old home and their new one (1).

The starting point of the book is the initiation of European Memory Studies with the 1950 posthumous publications of Maurice Halbwachs, the French philosopher who, on the basis of his own displacement and experiences during both world wars (he would perish in Buchenwald in 1945), developed the concept of collective memory and of the relationship between memory and identity. Subsequent work in the field of memory studies focused attention on mediating processes "that entwine and rupture the bonds between individual, social, and cultural memory across place, space, and time" (2). These processes are referred to as the 'transmission' of culture by memory, or of the 'transmission' of cultural memory. However, such frames do not leave any space for "processes by which these transmissions come to be realised," leaving open the possibility for produc-

tive dialogue between Memory Studies and Translation Studies. Like Simon, who speaks of sensory places, Radstone and Wilson refer to Walter Benjamin who "points to the role of the senses in forging connections between the past and the present" (2). Connections between the past and the present are explored throughout Radstone's and Wilson's edited volume. In the introduction of their book, Radstone and Wilson refer to Jürgen Habermas and the proposition that "our world is represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organised stock of interpretative patterns" (3), and the constituent chapters examine a variety of such patterns.

Part I explores how "mapping memory's mediations, transformations, and transmissions across time, space, media, institutions, and scales" approaches those processes "as instances of translation" (6). Susannah Radstone's chapter uses a carriage clock that traveled from London to Melbourne as a case study to explore how migrant objects are remembered and how that remembrance is translated. Radstone relates her analysis to the work of the French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche on enigmatic signifiers and messages. This analytic space resonates with the approach taken by Simon in relation to translation sites, where what remains largely unnoticed in daily life is treated as a source of information about interconnecting and sometimes even competing worldviews. However, more agentic accounts of [migrant] subjectivity comes at a cost as they tend to produce binary accounts "between the homely and the unhomely that overlooked their mutual implication" (24).

Building on Bella Brodzki's suggestion that "translation is the mode through which what is dead, disappeared, forgotten, buried, or suppressed overcomes its determined fate by being borne (and thus born anew) to other contexts across time and space" (Brodzki 2007:6), Alison Ribeiro de Menezes examines in her chapter the role of the visual art as "the bearer of memories of the illegally detained, forcibly migrated, and improperly buried" (27), in this case, the disappeared during the Northern Irish Troubles. Translation here is a broad concept through which these disappearances may be allocated a new life (of memory and remembrance) through the actions of cultural translators and their approximations, in a sort of cross-cultural transmemory. Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen relates the repertoire of her own oral history and experience of trauma as a Vietnamese refugee in Australia to the experiences of creating oral history archives and translating testimonies of Vietnamese refugees – despite their reluctance to provide their own backgrounds (45). Invoking Derrida's motto that if the readability of a legacy were given, then we would have nothing to inherit from it (Derrida 1994:16), Grace Pundyk commemorates her own 'unknown' Polish grandmother, who perished in a Gulag, extending this absent transmission into a case study of the sensorial process of remaking wounded and even unsaid memory. Maria

Tumarkin, herself "a first generation migrant who avoids immigration museums" (72), analyzes translation and memory from the perspective of the migrant's being neither here nor there and reflects on how emotional and psychological realities of being an immigrant are translated into a museological context.

Part II of Radstone and Wilson's edited volume focuses on the inevitability of cross-cultural translation in settings of migration. Mridula Nath Chakraborty's chapter builds on work by the Indo-American writer Jhumpa Lahiri and her struggles with her native language, Bengali, and the language of social advancement in her (linguistic) exile, English, with her identity constantly meandering between alienation and belonging. Also related to English as the language of advancement (and the prerequisite for assimilation and citizenship), Kyle Harvey and Kate Darian-Smith's chapter examines *You Say the Word*, an Australian television program from the 1970s and dedicated to teaching English to non-English speaking migrants. In line with Simon's translation sites, Diego Lazzarich's contribution traces the history of the Italian word *foiba*, meaning a common grave for victims of military retaliations and political assassinations (101). Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams and Jacqueline Lo use the non-spaces of education and television to examine the way in which translation shapes and informs contested pasts and conflicting memories across generations among European migrants in Australia, while Williams and Lo use a 2016 exhibition in Melbourne about Poland to discuss intergenerational translations of home. In the concluding chapter of the book, Rita Wilson examines how two authors "combine text and images to create a productive narrative and a visual remapping of their private relationship to the worlds they inhabit, which, in turn, provides new insights into the complex interrelations between personal and collective cultural memory" (150). Wilson ties together several of the main concepts and ideas from the previous chapters and frames linguistic and cultural diversity in new settlements as well as in places that have been left behind in time or space.

Translational interconnections across time and space

Sherry Simon's compelling book allows for appreciating the historical relationship between the linguistic variety of one specific (type of) place to play and the way diverse modern cities are shaped today. This approach is seconded to a large extent by the academic work of Baynham and Lee on translanguaging. There are, however, differences: Simon uses places and non-places to provide substance for her point of view, whereas Baynham and Lee focus on translanguaging and its relationship to the moment of interaction. Both, however, posit the fragmentary as the foundation for the future of the diverse urban contexts we inhabit:

> Our century is wary of utopian ambitions. Rather it is from the ruins of Babel, from the broken, splintered, dispersed state of humanity that a new ideal of communication emerges. Out of these fragments comes the exuberant diversity of our cosmopolitan present – with translation its most powerful form of expression.
>
> (Simon 2019:10)

The century that drives the fragmentation of humanity also creates a connection between translation and migration, which moves the notion of translation away from the institution of translation and closer to cultural phenomena at large (Wilson, 5). Of course, from the selection of locations and spheres discussed in Radstone and Wilson, one can easily draw analogies and parallels with Simon's translation sites, for instance, by relocating the War Hotel in Sarajevo (Section 2, Chapter 8) to the Hotel des Mille Collines in Kigali, Rwanda. The former was a hub for journalists during the conflict, while the latter also was a center of communication, mediating between the rampant violence of the genocide taking place outside the hotel and the safekeeping of over 1,200 refugees – both Hutu and Tutsi – within the hotel grounds. Both hotels acted like "an indoor city […], an enclave providing protection against the chaos outside," and as such were "implicated in relations of unequal power" (Simon 2019:116–117). There as well, translanguaging appears alongside the different repertoires accommodated on the grounds of the hotel, foregrounded by the presence of internally displaced people, by migratory routes caused by conflict.

Reading the three books discussed here – albeit far too briefly to do them credit – is highly recommended, whether done sequentially or even simultaneously. In their mutually complementary ways, they explore the extremely intriguing ways in which translanguaging, space, memory and migration can contribute to our understanding of translation and vice versa. At a time when many question the need for translation, giving the rapid increase in automation and the growing influence of artificial intelligence – translation – both as a practice and as a mode of thinking – is crucial for transcending spatial and temporal borders while expanding the associations shared within the diverse spaces humans occupy.

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