

Call for Papers

Literary Self-Translation and its Metadiscourse: Power Relations in Postcolonial Contexts

University of Liège, Belgium

26th and 27th October 2023

Initially relegated to the margins of translation studies, literary self-translation has now become a research topic in its own right, both in the fields of translation studies and comparative literature. While translation studies typically concentrates on the variety of (sociological, ideological, aesthetic) reasons why authors would choose to translate their literary texts themselves and on comparisons between self-translations, translations and other types of transfer activities such as rewriting, the field of comparative literature addresses self-translation mainly as a cause of literary multilingualism, with a clear focus on so-called transnational literatures. Our conference aims to bring both approaches together by examining self-translation as a practice that prompts self-reflexive metadiscourses on literary and translation production and gives new insights into the motivations and literary language uses of multilingual writers. This metadiscourse is present in the literary text itself and in essays, speeches delivered during award ceremonies, interviews, blogs, social media posts, academic lectureships or activism statements for minority rights.

Self-translations challenge binaries pertaining to the relationship between original and copy, author and translator, source and target language, which are inherent in the traditional understanding of translation itself. In a world marked by globalisation, transnational movements and the aftermath of colonialism, self-translation also unsettles power relations and forms of imbalance that are especially at play in contexts in which minority and majority languages come into contact. By taking a closer look at the metadiscourses of authors who use self-translation as a literary tool, we seek to analyse to what extent this practice counters linguistic hegemony and/or cultural oppression in contexts characterised by power differentials, but also to understand why and how self-translation might function as a source of inequalities.

Contributions from different disciplines, linguistic traditions and on various historical periods are welcome. While we are particularly interested in forms of self-translation in postcolonial contexts, we also encourage participants to submit propositions highlighting power relations in other transnational contexts. Possible questions and topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What are the factors influencing the choice to self-translate in all kinds of linguistic and cultural minority settings, such as those experienced by indigenous communities in various postcolonial areas or by migrant writers and writers in exile?
- How is the practice of self-translation shaped, for instance, by collaborative writing projects involving asylum-seekers and/or refugees, or by writers self-translating into more than one language?
- How is self-translation used, in postcolonial countries, as a way of escaping national censorship or as a weapon to denounce abusive situations?

- What are the reasons prompting some authors' *refusal* to self-translate in given postcolonial circumstances?
- How can the practices of 'canonical' self-translators be reinterpreted in the light of postcolonial approaches?

This literary and translation studies conference co-organised by the University of Liège (ULiège) and the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) will be held in Liège on 26th and 27th October 2023, under the auspices of the local translation and postcolonial studies centres, namely CIRTl (Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche en Traduction et en Interprétation) and CEREP (Centre d'Enseignement et de Recherche en Études Postcoloniales).

We welcome proposals in both English and French, providing a basis for 20-minute papers (which will be followed by 10-minute discussions). Please email abstracts of no more than 300 words and a 100-word bio note to postcolonialselftranslation@uliege.be by 15th February 2023. Notification of acceptance will be sent by 31st March 2023.

The Convenors: Marie HERBILLON (ULiège)
Myriam-Naomi WALBURG (ULiège)
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