

LIVING LANGUAGES IN TRANSLATION

17TH EDITION OF *VOYAGES IN TRANSLATION STUDIES*

FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 2018

“The translation process can no longer be depicted as a bridge, since languages are not stable enough to serve as foundations.”

Myriam Suchet, *Indiscipline!*

This year, *Voyages in Translation Studies* will explore the role of translation in shaping languages and challenge the notion of “living languages” in political, social and cultural spheres. We are honoured to welcome **Myriam Suchet**, professor of French language and literature at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle—Paris 3, and Director of Paris 3’s Centre d’études québécoises, as our keynote speaker.

Language, according to Russian semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin ([1975] 1981), “is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world.” Yet, as Suchet (2016) notes, being immersed in one language on a daily basis may lead us to define language boundaries where none exist. Languages interact and overlap, and in examining their history and the role of translation in that history, it is clear that the strategy of portraying languages as unitary entities has been repeatedly used to assist in the construction of national identities.

Works by France Daigle, Ahmadou Kourouma, Juan Goytisolo and Paul Celan challenge dominant narratives by revealing how language boundaries have been historically established. According to Rainier Grutman (1997), heterolingual texts are characterized by their use of multiple languages, idioms or varieties; for Suchet (2014), they also conjure up alternative representations that redefine one’s relationship with the Other. Suchet has called for translation to be studied from the perspective of heterolingual writing, which would involve questioning prevalent linguistic assumptions and examining how heterolingual texts transgress such assumptions.

Indigenous storytellers have long been aware of how reciprocal relations in translation are closely associated to the vitality of a language, and they have made use of heterolingual techniques to create bonds within and outside of their communities. Authors such as Tomson Highway, Marilyn Dumont and Joséphine Bacon often contribute to the tremendous efforts undertaken in their communities to revitalize Indigenous languages, leading to various questions about the function of these voices *in translation* and whether concepts such as “dormant languages” can dispel myths of extinction. Such work presents new ways of envisioning our relationship with language itself, and as Niigaanwewidam Sinclair (2014) has stated, “It is not to assume that we own language. It is to know that we are only a participant in its energy, a relation, a cousin that visits and shares tea, drinking in its power.”

In *Eco-Translation* (2017), Michael Cronin builds on this idea in a more environmental sphere, calling into question the anthropocentrism of translation theory and describing the alarming state of the planet on which we speak and translate. Cronin invites us to reflect on the role translation studies research could play in restructuring the boundaries of communication that we have built in order to account for interactions with other living species and our environment.

The “living” component of languages can also be studied through a more biological lens. Maria Tymoczko (2005) has suggested that in the near future, neuroscientists and translation studies scholars will join forces, “radically [changing] the way translation is thought about and approached.” Such joint efforts could lead to new insights into how brain processes such as perception, memory and brain plasticity contribute to the translation process (Tymoczko 2012).

The following is a non-exhaustive list of other topics that relate to the conference theme:

- The history of languages and the impact of (re)translation on a language’s development
- The impact of intercultural contact and migration on languages
- The evolution and translation of Indigenous languages, oral histories and narratives
- The role of linguistics and translation in the revitalization of endangered languages and cultural heritage (the notion of “living” and “dead” languages, the revival of Hebrew, invented languages, etc.)
- Political resistance of languages in colonial and postcolonial contexts
- Translation and terminology issues in the life sciences
- User-centered translation
- Gender-related language issues

We welcome proposals for oral presentations (20 minutes in length, followed by a 10-minute question period) and poster presentations on these and other topics related to the conference theme. Proposals may be written in **English** or **French**. They must include a **title** and a **300-word abstract** accompanied by the following information: **name, email address, university** and **program of study**, as well as a brief **bio-bibliography (100 words)**. Please indicate whether you have a preference for an oral presentation or a poster presentation. Given the limited number of oral presentation slots, the Organizing Committee may suggest that you prepare a poster instead of an oral presentation.

Proposals must be sent to tragrad1@gmail.com by **December 22, 2017**.

Feel free to email us with any questions you may have. We look forward to reading your submissions!

The Organizing Committee for *Voyages in Translation Studies*
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Suggested Readings

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Chacaby, Maya Odehamik. 2015. "Cripple Two-Tongue and the Myth of Benign Translatability." *Tusaaji: A Translation Review* 4:4. 1–11.

Giroux, Dalie. 2017. "Les langages de la colonisation: Quelques éléments de réflexion sur le régime linguistique subalterne en Amérique du Nord." *Tahir* 8: 1–26.

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