

Transnational image-building and reception: linking up translation studies, reception studies and imagology

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This panel looks at the translation of cultural products from two broad perspectives: 1) the selection and production phase, 2) the reception and the power that translations have in the dissemination of national images. In this process of circulation and exchange, “translation opens up different vistas on texts and engenders multiple afterlives beyond the source language and culture, not only giving target language readers access to new literature but also providing new insights into the source text: the sending culture is interpreted in innovative ways, while the receiving culture is transformed and enriched” (Nelson & Maher 2013: 9).

Drawing on the sociological theories about the transnational circulation of literary works expounded by Sapiro (2016) and Heilbron (1999) and in the light of recent research (van Doorslaer, Flynn & Leerssen 2016), the theoretical framework will combine Reception Studies, Translation Studies and Imagology, not only to foster the process of cross fertilization among the above mentioned disciplines, but also to gain insight into the ways in which translated cultural products (books, films, TV series, news media) are selected, come into being, circulate and are received by foreign audiences. The ways in which symbolic and economic capital are embodied and enacted by literary institutions, academies, juries, critics and reviewers will be explored through a study of the interconnections among these agents.

As far as the imagological perspective is concerned, the relationship between the construction of national images and the selection of cultural products to be translated and promoted abroad will be scrutinised. As van Doorslaer, Flynn and Leerssen point out: “In recent decades, Translation Studies has indeed shown a growing interest in national and cultural characterization and stereotyping, including the selection and potential manipulation procedures involved” (2016: 2). In exploring the flow of cultural products from the source to the target culture, the questions that this panel will seek to answer are:

- What selection criteria are adopted to decide which cultural products are transferred into other cultures?
- What roles are played by institutional agents, translators and editors in this process?
- How are authors and their works represented in the target culture(s)?
- How do reviewers, critics, academics, prize committees and the social media (Facebook, Amazon reviews, Goodreads) contribute to the reception of cultural products?
- What role does translation play in the dissemination of national or cultural images?

Relevant topics include but are not limited to:

- The network of agents involved in the selection and production of translated literature
- National images in translated literature
- Historical perspectives on the selection, reception and image projection of cultural products
- Non-European approaches to image-building and reception of translated literature
- Language groups, stateless nations and identities in translation
- Packaging cultural products to the target audiences: book covers, film posters, prefaces, reviews and other paratexts

- The translator as a cultural mediator
- The selection policies of cultural products
- Institutional recognition and reception

Bibliography

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