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### Translation, Postcolonial Studies, and the Americas

#### Anecdote

I have been recently conducting research on the topic of translation and resistance for a new book, and my travels have taken me a couple of times to Chiapas, Mexico. I have been looking at the San Andrés accords, the peace talks between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government that took place in San Andrés Sacamch'en and in San Cristóbal de Las Casas in October 1995 and February 1996.<sup>1</sup> The talks were full of fascinating translation problems, including the subjects to be negotiated, the definitions of the terms, and the groups to be represented. Many disagreements arose over the definition and translation of terms such as "land," "autonomy," "democracy," "free determination," "representation," "elections," "justice," "education," and "respect for and continuation of traditional customs and knowledge," all taking on different meanings depending upon the different languages and cultures into which they were translated. But that is another paper. In this telling, what I want to emphasise is the extent to which the chief spokesperson and translator, Subcomandante Marcos, was concerned with representation and translation matters, and the extent to which he fought for giving voice to the *abuelos*,

to the indigenous tongues, and to modes of expression ingrained in the indigenous cultures. One of Marcos's big points was to have not a rectangular table with two long sides for the Zapatistas versus the government, but a larger table with at least four equal sides, one for the government, and several sides for multiple indigenous groups. Multiple groups within the indigenous societies, including but not limited to those allied with the Zapatistas, were much hoping to find conditions of positive change that would lead to better relations with the rest of Mexican society.

In the end, representatives from twenty-two Mexican states, including community leaders, anthropologists, lawyers, educators, linguists, social workers, human rights activists, writers, and artists attended the talks. The majority of the representatives were indigenous peoples, rooted/tied to/anchored in their *particular* traditions, organisations, communities. The goal of the Zapatistas at the talks was that representatives would make proposals for *all* indigenous peoples of Mexico, not just proposals for any particular ethnic group. Not all Native American problems are the same. Many languages are involved, including Chol, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and Zapotec; different religions are involved, including Catholic, Protestant, Mayan, even Muslim; and different indigenous groups have different political affiliations, including PRI, PAN, Communist, and Socialist. The problem of negotiation, from the Zapatista perspective, could not be viewed in binary oppositions: Zapatista/government; urban/rural; indigenous/imperial; rich/poor; or coloniser/colonised. When a Priest, a Panist, a Catholic, or a Communist attempted to get the representatives to vote on an issue reflecting some party interest, the Zapatistas would continually work not to let the talks move in the directions of some *vested* social, political, or religious interest. The first goal of the Zapatistas was to allow those who

have been silenced too long to be heard. Marcos's idea for the negotiations was to let languages, thoughts, and desires proliferate, juxtaposed and disjointed, before any summarising and classifying could occur. And then when classifying, Marcos's idea was to move away from old categories of negation—laws, limitations, castration, and prison—and toward opening avenues for new and creative thought which would allow multiple forms of “justice,” “autonomy,” “democracy,” “representation,” and “self-determination” to proliferate, so that no individual voice, interpretation, or translation would be silenced. The translation of these key terms, thus, is not something that can be looked up in a bi-lingual dictionary, but is at present unwritten. The meanings for the future of Mexico will evolve only after drawing on all the possible translations from all the multiple languages and cultures that comprise the Mexican state.

## **Introduction**

I shift focus now from the problems in Chiapas, Mexico, to the Americas in general. While postcolonial translation in the Americas is clearly lagging far behind models and strategies developing in former British colonies in Asia, or former French colonies in northern Africa and southeast Asia, a growing body of theories and strategies for postcolonial translation is emerging in the Americas. Similar questions apply in the New World. In translation, how does one, when writing in the language of the target culture, especially if that language is a descendent of a Western European language, give voice to the ideas, thoughts, language, sounds, metaphors, as expressed in another/foreign/different language, especially if that language is a Native American language? In this paper, I look briefly at three leading voices of postcolonial translation in the Americas:

Larry Venuti from the United States representing “foreignizing” translation, Nicole Brossard/Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood in Canada, representing “*réécriture au féminin*,” and Augusto and Haroldo de Campos in Brazil, representing “cannibalistic” translation. I then look at what might be called the first wave of criticism of those theories levied by translation scholars such as Douglas Robinson, Rosemary Arrojo, and Roberto Schwarz, who critique the respective postcolonial theories above. I conclude by raising questions regarding the respective critiques, wondering if their forms of critique do not reflect vested interests that might hinder rather than further the exploration of postcolonial thought and modes, including translation, for giving voice to those ideas.

### **Lawrence Venuti: “Foreignizing Translation”**

Perhaps the most influential and controversial translation studies scholar of the last decade in North America has been Lawrence Venuti, editor of the pioneering anthology *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (1992), author of two major books on translation—*The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995) and *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998)—and compiler of *The Translation Studies Reader* (1999).<sup>2</sup>

Venuti’s contributions to translation studies are multiple. In this paper, I will refer primarily to his concept of “foreignizing” translation, which has been used by scholars such as Sherry Simon and Samia Mehretz when referring to postcolonial translation.

Venuti’s main thesis is that translation tends to be an invisible practice in the United States. Translations are judged to be successful when they read “fluently,”

giving the appearance that they have not been translated. This belief, shared by a network of professionals within the translation industry, including publishers, editors, reviewers, readers, and even the translators themselves, reinforces fairly traditional notions of authorship and colonialist conceptions of constructing an original.<sup>3</sup> The problems with such a situation, according to Venuti, are twofold: first, it marginalises practising translators, colonial and non-colonial alike, making them subservient to the author and defining their practice as derivative and secondary; and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it erases the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text that the very act of translation purports to carry over into the receiving culture. By rewriting the text according to the prevailing styles of the receiving culture—in this case invariably the colonising power—and by adapting images and metaphors of the foreign text to the target culture's preferred systems of beliefs, translators are not only severely constrained in terms of their options to carry out their task, but also forced to alter the foreign text to conform to the receiving culture's forms and ideas.

To contradict colonial modes of discourse, Venuti advocates “foreignizing translation” and/or “abusive fidelity.” By “foreignizing” he means any translation strategy that resists domestication, fluency, and transparency.<sup>4</sup> By “abusive fidelity” he means much the same thing: the translator seeks to reproduce those very features of the foreign text that “abuse” or resist the prevailing forms and values in the receiving culture, thereby allowing the translator to be faithful to aspects of the source text, but still participate in effecting cultural change in the target language.<sup>5</sup>

What features does Venuti suggest that the practising translator reproduce? Precisely those that signal linguistic and cultural difference. He is attracted to poststructural strategies that foreground the play of the signifier, puns, neologisms, archaisms, dialects, satire, fragmented syntax, and experimental forms, all of which result in discontinuous, fragmented, and less than unified final texts. Such translation techniques expose the illusion of transparency by making the translator's work visible, and thereby encouraging a rethinking of the secondary, derivative status of the translator. They also, ironically, preserve important elements of the source text that frequently are smoothed over, elided, and/or adapted to the point that they are no longer recognisable. Thus one can see the attraction, for postcolonial translators, of Venuti's preferred style.

Questions remain regarding Venuti's recommendations for practising translators. While he clearly likes poststructuralist theories, and scatters references to Derrida, Cixous, de Man, Deleuze and Guattari throughout his texts, I suggest this poststructuralist vocabulary can be deceiving. Venuti's theory may be more modernist than postmodern, and his "alternative" is still couched in the same "faithful" vs. "free" debate that has characterised translation for thousands of years. In his history of translation in North America sketched out in *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti clearly favors translators such as Ezra Pound (translator of Provençal poets, Old English epics, and Chinese ideograms), Dudley Fitts (translator of classical texts), Celia and Louis Zukovsky (translators of Catullus's poetry), and Paul Blackburn (translator of Provençal poets and later of Julio Cortázar), who are all praised by Venuti for their "foreignizing" strategies. These translators can hardly be

called postcolonial translators. The link, he claims, is that these translators are “marginal” translators. The term “modernist” or “non-academic” might be more appropriate, for these translators’ linguistic, sexual, and political translation choices have challenged and offended more traditional scholars, and many academic reviewers have criticised their linguistic and cultural choices. But in terms of creative writers and practising translators in the United States, their translations are well known and perhaps even more influential than their academic counterparts. The strategies employed—an emphasis on vitality and energy; the absence of aesthetic references in favour of material ones; the sexual frankness; the use of varied lexicons, dialects, colloquialisms, and vernaculars; the attention to the music and tone; and the use of archaisms and foreign terms—all reflect conventions well known in modernist texts.

The two paradigms Venuti sets up for translation—fluent and foreignizing—seem to allow no middle ground. With regard to the history of translation in the United States, not all the translators he wishes to categorise as producing fluent translations would agree; many, including Felsteiner, Kunitz, Merwin, Bly, Weissbort, Auster, and Wilbur—translators who do not subscribe to Venuti’s preferred strategies—are in their own ways quite successful in importing foreign ideas and concepts. Additionally, many of the translators he claims as marginal and abusive, are in fact drawing upon long literary traditions of using translation to challenge cultural norms of the receiving society. Many of Venuti’s proposals for practising translators remind scholars of Brechtian alienation effects, or Russian

formalist *ostranenie* elements, rather than the poststructuralist devices to which he alludes.

Some critics who are involved in the rethinking of postcolonial translation theory have pointed out that Venuti's strategy is not new. Marilyn Gaddis Rose calls his approach "neo-literalist",<sup>6</sup> not poststructural or postcolonial. Other scholars have gone further. Douglas Robinson<sup>7</sup> suggests that with regard to Venuti's translations of Tarchetti, or Suzanne Jill Levine's translation of Cabrera Infante, the translators are actually *more* faithful to the foreign syntax and semantics than those translators whose work is deemed more fluent. Robinson proposes that Venuti's theory is elitist, appealing primarily to a narrow range of North American intellectuals, and not to the popular, populist middle and lower classes, to normal practising translators, or, especially, to peoples with oppressed ethnic backgrounds. Other translation scholars, such as John Milton in Brazil, have echoed the "elitist" charge.<sup>8</sup> Michael Cronin in Ireland goes even further, suggesting that perhaps such a foreignizing strategy might work in some cases—such as Venuti's translating an Italian bohemian poet—but that one should be careful about any such universal application of the strategy.<sup>9</sup> Smaller countries with lesser known languages and traditions may not appreciate translators from large and powerful countries such as the United States committing such abuses to their texts and turning all writers from postcolonial cultures into a kind of homogeneous modernist text. Indeed, such acts might be interpreted as another kind of manipulation or colonisation. Venuti, while claiming to be on the side of the oppressed and ethnically marginalised, has modelled a theory that advocates that the "foreignizing" strategy be used to break down the hegemonic norms of the North

American (European) culture. However, the strategy in practice also tends to commit abuses against the source-language culture and author, creating all too familiar unbalanced relations of power with the source-language author having little or no way of fighting back.

**Nicole Brossard/Lotbinière-Harwood/Barbara Godard: *réécriture au féminin***

A group of feminists in Quebec have taken a different course from Lawrence Venuti, rethinking postcolonial translation not as a form of writing in opposition to some sort of prevailing “fluent” paradigm, but rather as a new form of productive writing in and of itself, meshed or interconnected with “original” writing. As the French feminists developed a kind of writing they called *écriture féminine* to challenge the logocentric male discourse of their culture, so too did the Quebec feminists develop a kind of translation they called *réécriture au féminin* (rewriting in/of the feminine), one that emphasises difference without hierarchising and that celebrates creativity in both translation and original writing. For writers such as Nicole Brossard, author of novels such as *Picture theory*, *La Lettre aérienne*, and *Le Désert mauve*,<sup>10</sup> translation is not distinguished from “original” writing, and not viewed as a neo-literal, subordinate, derivative practice. Brossard encourages her translators, including Barbara Godard, translator of *These our Mothers* and *Picture Theory*, and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, translator of *Under Tongue* and *Mauve Desert*,<sup>11</sup> to intervene, to write, to translate from within, and “to go further.” The Quebec translators’ task might be described both as resisting standard colonising French French in favour of a liberating Montréal French, as well as challenging patriarchal language wherever it may occur, in

standard French as well as in the encroaching United States English. *Réécriture au féminin* is cognizant of the constructed nature of language and the possibilities for participating in the construction of culture. Rather than positing sexual difference in language as something given, the Quebec feminists seem to be more intent on exposing the manipulated nature of language, the limitations imposed on a culture for reasons of colonisation and/or patriarchy, and creative possible solutions to escape those limitations.

Rather than using writing to exposes essential differences between masculine and feminine, the Quebec translators use translation to enlarge the semantic space shared by women and others whose voices have been covered up to the dominant discourse/language/cultural conditions of the given society. Rather than rewriting everything in the feminine, which implies a reversal of roles and the construction of another hierarchy, the Quebec women translators tend to see everything in context, with different kinds of texts—theatre, novels, poetry as well as catalogues, annual reports, legal texts, publicity brochures, travel writing—allowing for different kinds of liberties.<sup>12</sup> Thus the feminist project, which began as a women’s translators movement, has evolved into a multiculturalist project and a rethinking of the very definition of Quebec culture, open to any number of differing voices.

What are some of the features characteristic of *réécriture au féminin*? In *Re-belle et infidèle*,<sup>13</sup> Lotbinière-Harwood reviews some of the strategies Quebec translators use to play with the language, including encoding new meanings with existing words as well as avoiding, or at least using ironically, pejorative words designating women. Similar to Venuti, the Quebec translators prefer puns, neologisms, and experimental forms. In her film *Firewords*,<sup>14</sup> for example, Quebec writer Louky Bersianik asks “*Vas-tu te faire*

*appeler une cafetière si tu tiens un café?*” (Literally, “Will you be called a coffee-maker if you run a café?”). *Cafetier*, the masculine form, describes the owner of a café; *cafetière* refers to a coffee-maker and is never used to refer to a woman owner. In her translation, Lotbinière-Harwood ironically uses “chefess” in “Are you going to be called a chefess?”<sup>15</sup> Bersianik continues with “*Quel est le féminin de garçon? C’est garce!*” (Literally, “What is the feminine for *garçon*/boy? It’s *garce*/slut!”). While at one point in French linguistic history, *garce* used to mean “girl,” over time its meaning has shifted to the point where today its primary connotation is “slut” or “whore.” Lotbinière-Harwood substitutes a similar slippage in English when she translates the passage as “What is the feminine of dog? It’s bitch!”<sup>16</sup> In addition, translators are given the freedom to add to text, to run with the ideas, to expand upon the metaphors and images in the target language, thereby allowing new meanings to proliferate.

Yet the Quebec feminist translators are doing more than merely invoking French feminist typographical changes and resexing pronouns to destabilise male discourse; Translation, in the words of Barbara Godard, another translator of Brossard, becomes a way to signify difference in cultural codes despite its similarity to a source text. This difference is the key concept in the larger cultural practice of challenging the languages and cultural policies that govern the Canadian nation-state. She writes, “The feminist translator affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. *Womanhandling* the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator.”<sup>17</sup> Translation, thus, has become a major theme of the fiction and secondary literature itself. Translation, in their Quebec feminist view, can be used increasingly as a tool to articulate

a new theory of culture, one that is more inclusive, more “democratic” for all its citizens, and more open for change and evolution. Whereas in most countries, translation, including feminist translation, continues to be of marginal national interest, in Canada it has become one of the central issues in considerations in the highest literary and cultural circles.

Again, as in the case with Venuti, certain critics rethinking postcolonial translation have begun to critique the Quebec women. In “Feminist, ‘Orgasmic’ Theories of Translation and their Contradictions,”<sup>18</sup> Rosemary Arrojo takes issue with the concept of *réécriture au féminin*, especially with its re-writing, re-reading, aspect, and the empowering of the translator that accompanies such a definition of translation. She particularly takes issue with Godard’s notion of “womanhandling,” equating it with traditional notions of manhandling and its accompanying notions of violence and manipulation. Despite claims to trying to find a new way of translation that is not governed by traditional binary opposites—neither masculine nor feminine, source/target text, faithful/free, good/bad—Arrojo feels that the Quebec feminists are prejudiced in favour of the feminine, and that whatever the in-between space that they claim to have opened up, it is essentially a feminine space and politics that in many ways mirror the violent and appropriative practices that have characterised translation in patriarchal cultures historically. Arrojo concludes that a search for a non-violent theory of translation, one based on respectful collaboration between author and translator is “utopic,” “idealistic,” and “incompatible” with any process to “determine and take over meaning,”<sup>19</sup> which means, in short, incompatible with the process of translation itself. Arrojo wants us to realise that all translation involves political choices, and that

translators need to be cognizant of their own interests and goals, and that these interests are inevitably biased and in some way violent, since they always intend to replace other texts and translations.

Arrojo's critique, I think, does an injustice to the level of deconstructive and feminist thinking that has gone on in Quebec and unfairly equates often extremely respectful author/translator collaborations with violent, non-respectful, and confrontational theories of colonising translation. I find the contributions of the Quebec feminist translators significant in several areas, including their viewing translation as a movement across multiple sign-systems and languages simultaneously. I certainly do not find anything non-respectful in the Quebec feminist translation strategies. I am also attracted to their view of translation as a creative process, not just in terms of art, but also in terms of identity formation and the evolution of the society as a whole. The translator, together with the original author, is seen as a creative, evolving subject, and the activity of translation as one that involves an active/activist translator.

### **Haroldo and Augusto de Campos: Translation and Cannibalisation**

Perhaps the leading postcolonial theory to emerge from the Americas has been the *movimento antropófago* or “cannibalist movement.” in Brazil. Founded by Oswald de Andrade in 1928 with the “Manifesto Antropófago,” originally published in the first issue of the *Revista de Antropofagia*,<sup>20</sup> the group comprised just one of many avant-garde movements characteristic of the age, and indeed intersects with modernist movements and manifestos ongoing in Europe and the Americas at the time. This Brazilian movement more or less disappeared from view in the West until resurrected by a group of

translators such as the brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos in the mid-1960s, then by filmmakers such as Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Glauber Rocha, Nelson Pereira dos Santos in the late 1960s and early 1970s, musicians such as Caetano Veloso in the 1970s and 1980s, and most recently by critics and theorists such as Else Vieira, Sergio Bellei, Roberto Schwarz, Nelson Arscher and others in the 1980s and 1990s.

The term itself derives from the cannibalistic acts of the Tupi Indians, the indigenous tribe first met by the Portuguese, French, and Spanish explorers. The Tupi practice, however, was by no means “heathenistic” or irreligious in any way. Despite the way it has been characterised by Western explorers, missionaries, and anthropologists, it was highly religious, and in many ways akin to the Christian practice of communion with its symbolic drinking of the blood of Christ. For the Tupi Indians, cannibalism had nothing to do with the European notion, which involves concepts of devouring, dismembering, and mutilation, but rather an act of taking back out of love, honour, and nourishment. Only the bravest and most virtuous soldiers were devoured. They would first be taken into the community to live among the families and children of the conquering tribe so that the people could learn virtuous behaviour from the captured soldier. The final act of eating the brave soldier was symbolic as well as physical. Cannibalism was seen as an act of nourishing, in which the positive values of the brave but defeated soldier would be digested and absorbed and become part of the future physical and mental identity of the victorious community. In a Darwinian fashion, the transfusion of blood was the means by which the virtues would be transmitted.

One of the best portrayals of the Tupi culture can be viewed in Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s film *Como era gostosa o meu Francês* [*How Tasty was my Little Frenchman*],

produced in Brazil in 1971. Dos Santos, part of Brazil's *Cinema Nova* movement of the 1960s and 1970s, did extensive anthropological research on Amerindian tribes of Brazil and consulted historical depictions of such tribes, including the one by Hans Staden, a German gunner on a Portuguese ship who was captured by the Tupinambá tribe, but who escaped and wrote the account *Hans Staden, The True History of His Captivity, 1557*.<sup>21</sup> Dos Santos reconstructed a complete Tupinambá village with authentic sets and costumes based on paintings of the period. In the film, a Frenchman is captured and mistaken for a Portuguese soldier. He is taken to the Tupinambá village, where he lives with the chief's family and teaches the villagers many things, including how to use European weapons, including a cannon. He falls in love with the chief's daughter and becomes loved by her as well as by the rest of the tribe. Western viewers think that he will win the tribe's affection and his life will be spared, but they will be disappointed, for the love and reverence felt for the Frenchman, especially that of the chief's daughter, only underscores the tribe's resolve to carry out the ultimate act of reverence.

The leaders of the movement to re-evaluate and return to the cannibalist metaphor were the two brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, poets, translators, and literary theorists, who rose to fame in the 1950s as distinguished concrete poets and translators, who began theorising literature and cultural studies in Brazil and Latin American in the 1960s, and who continue to be influential today. At the last count, Haroldo de Campos has written twelve books of poetry, eighteen of literary criticism, fourteen of translations/transcreations, as well as numerous essays on theatre, cinema, and the plastic arts. His theory of literature, which derives to a large extent from his work in translation, and for which he has coined numerous metaphors, including "recreation,"

“transcreation,” “transtextualization,” “transparaization,” “transillumination,” and most provocatively, “transluciferation mefistofáustica,” resurrect and further develop the anthropophagist metaphor. Haroldo de Campos’s essays from the 1980s, such as “Transluciferção Mefistofáustica,”<sup>22</sup> a postscript to his translation of Goethe’s *Faust* published as *Deus e o diabo no Fausto de Goethe* [*God and the Devil in Goethe’s Faust*], “Transblanco: Reflexion sobre la transcreación de ‘Blanco’ de Octavio Paz, con una digresion sobre la teoria de la traducción del poeta Mexicano” [“Reflections on the Transcreation of Blanco by Octavio Paz, with a digression on the Mexican poet’s theory of translation”] collected in *Diseminario*,<sup>23</sup> and “The Rule of Anthropophagy: Europe under the Sign of Devoration,”<sup>24</sup> constitute a significant contribution to translation studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory. Augusto de Campos’s introduction to his volume *Verso, reverso, controverso* [*Verses, Reverses, Controversies*],<sup>25</sup> in which he equally links the act of translation to anthropophagy, and by coining concepts such as “intradução” (introduction/translation) to illustrate the intratextual as well as intertextual nature of translation, continues this line of investigation.

What are some of the main features of a cannibalist style of translation? As with Venuti and the Quebec French feminists, playing with the language, adding puns, ambiguities, phonetic resonance, multilingual referents, seems to be of primary importance. Translation is conceived of as a creative, transformative act, opening multiple lines of signification in the receiving culture. Cannibalist translation places a heavy emphasis on the phonetics of the original over the syntactic or semantic, and these sounds recreated in the target culture also tend to open new lines of association. Irony and parody are also elements emphasised often at the expense of what is commonly perceived

as a kind of pseudo-morality of the source culture. Haroldo de Campos's interpretation of the final stanzas of Goethe's *Faust*, parodying interpretations that emphasise Christian moralising, might serve as one example. In addition, and perhaps most radically, the translator has the freedom to interject local referents into the text: Augusto de Campos, for example, intersperses lines from Brazilian folksongs into his translations of John Donne, creating a kind of transcultural hybrid form that resonates in both European and Brazilian cultures.

For the Brazilian writers, translators, and filmmakers, cannibalism has become one of the primary conceits for illustrating Brazilian cultural difference, its bi-cultural development, and its complex and often contradictory identity as a nation. Its citizens have developed by absorbing many European values, but at the same time by not ignoring their indigenous roots. By reinterpreting, rewriting, and translating their own culture, incorporating positive elements from both European and Brazilian traditions, but at the same time questioning European sources with ethnocentric prejudices against indigenous peoples, these writers have arrived at a theory of translation and identity formation that is historically rich, culturally diverse, and theoretically highly original, anticipating many of the debates characteristic of critical theory in the West today. For many of the Brazilian translation scholars, there is an emphasis on international as well as national traits in their identity formation, on polylingualism rather than monolingualism and on complex hybrid cultural formation rather than on segregated, nativist, and often xenophobic views. Cannibalism has become perhaps the leading cultural metaphor in Brazil, reflecting the possibility of creating a new national culture, one not imitating

European or North American culture, but one blending elements of both North and South, European and indigenous, First and Third World.

In recent years, however, a powerful critique of cannibalism theory has been accumulating in Brazil, led by Roberto Schwarz, one of the most respected critics of Brazilian literature. In his *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*,<sup>26</sup> Schwarz suggests that Haroldo de Campos's move from *antropofagia* to transculturalisation and transluciferation reveals the failure of Brazil's modernising project, especially the failure of the intellectual elite of the country to construct their own identity. Indeed, much recent social as well as literary criticism regarding Brazil is characterised by commentary on the increasing failure of the culture to achieve the modernism and industrialisation of other Western nations. Rather than integration and interdependence, Schwarz sees disintegration and deeper and deeper dependencies, especially in the realm of economics, employment, and technology. Schwarz sees the goal of modernising via a cannibalist process of blending the rural Brazilian with the urban European as largely unattainable, another kind of utopian, elitist desire out of step with the realities of the situation.

Schwarz addressed Oswald de Andrade's poetry directly in an essay titled "The Cart, the Tram and the Modernist Poet" from *Misplaced Ideas*.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, Schwarz provides an insightful reading of one small poem by Oswald de Andrade about a horse-drawn cart stuck on a tramline and the reactions of the driver and the lawyers to the incident, pointing out the confrontations between industrialisation (the tramlines) and the primitive (horse and cart), between the cosmopolitan (the lawyers) and the indigenous (the driver). Yet his conclusions are a bit harsh, for Schwarz finds Oswald de Andrade's poetry "easy" and "illusionary," allied to the discourse of conservative modernisation,

pre-figuring cosmopolitan bourgeois culture, and, in sum, a kind of “critical jingoism.”<sup>28</sup> He views Oswald de Andrade’s theory as equally unsuccessful, offering only an “allegory and quasi-theory of Brazilian national identity” and later “a certain admixture of unreality and childishness.”<sup>29</sup> Schwarz is even more damning regarding the verse of Augusto de Campos. In an essay titled “A Historic Landmark” from the same collection, Schwarz again gives a perceptive reading of the concrete poem “Póstudo” [post-everything] by Augusto de Campos, published in the arts section of the *Folha de São Paulo*.<sup>30</sup> He regards the adjectives used to sum up the work and the theory as even more pointed and personal, finding it regressive, dogmatic, ignorant, and banal. Schwarz finds Augusto de Campos selfishly interested in only “blowing his own trumpet” and “owing nothing to anybody,”<sup>31</sup> rather than commenting, actually rather sadly and generally, upon the end of the age of the proliferation of post-structural theories.

Schwarz suggests that his own views on culture, which are expressed in more materialist terms than the literary cannibals he critiques, are more relevant to the conditions of what he refers to as the “real world” rather than the “misplaced” realm of ideas and identity. In my mind, however, this critique of cannibalism is not a new one, but a dated one, based on early Marxist objections to the decadent “art for art’s sake” experiments of the West. It should come as no surprise that Schwarz’s primary area of literary interest is the nineteenth-century realistic novel, and the theorists he prefers tend toward Marx, Lukács, Benjamin, Brecht, and Adorno. Schwarz’s assessment of the Brazilian cannibalist seems to me less well argued, and often unduly personal and vitriolic, when compared with the rest of his work, and out of touch with an accumulating

mass of data offered by cultural historians, critics, musicians, filmmakers, and postcolonial critics.

Yet Schwarz is not alone in his critique of the “elitist” nature of the de Campos brothers’ theories of translation. Sérgio Bellei in his essay “Brazilian Anthropophagy Revisited”<sup>32</sup> makes similar claims. He suggests that the anthropophagists have a kind of split consciousness, aware of both the “superior” European culture and the material backwardness of their own culture. The “purpose” of the anthropophagists, according to Bellei, was to dissolve the borders between the two,<sup>33</sup> leading to a certain reversibility between Brazil and Europe. For Bellei, thus, the anthropophagists’ movement reminds him of an earlier generation of Brazilian Romantic writers.

Bellei is particularly critical of Haroldo de Campos’s theory of open multilinguistic hybridisation, which he sees as an easy way of juxtaposing the underdeveloped with the developed on an equal playing-field. For Bellei, this is offensive, for it dismisses real material conditions and the historical stages of evolution. It also reaffirms aesthetics as an autonomous cultural practice cut off from real social practices. Bellei characterises de Campos as arguing that the world is a vast multicultural banquet in which “everybody eats everybody else.”<sup>34</sup> For Bellei, much depends upon who eats whom, and he finds that the question of power gets deleted from the theory. He traces the movement from the Romantic, through the avant-garde, to the postmodern, all detached and splitting the art from the social realities, as another kind of “art for art’s sake.” Bellei concludes his essay by arguing that, “As in Campos, texts are here only ‘multilingual hybridizations’ existing in a pure spatial dimension deprived of any historical depth.”<sup>35</sup>

To be frank, I do not find that these readings hold. It is precisely the historical depth that does resurface in a cannibalistic translation, invoking native cultural practices before contamination by colonisation from the sixteenth century right through to the forces of globalisation operative in Brazilian culture today. The power dimension is also manifest: cannibalist translators reject images of passive, submissive Native American consumers and instead favour the more aggressive images of the cannibal. The history traced goes back to the early days of colonization, and the trauma induced by colonial repression includes the religious conversions perpetrated by the Jesuits, the economic oppression carried out by the European-Brazilian governing elites, and the military dictatorship of the 1960s. In addition to the translators, many poets, artists, musicians and, later, filmmakers also invoke the metaphor to resist European assimilation and dependent relations throughout Brazilian history. Many artists feel that today the dominant, conservative social classes still control the power structure and that nothing has really changed. Filmmaker Pedro Andrade, for example, director of the cannibalist classic *Macunaíma* writes, “The present work relationships, as well as the relationships between people—social, political, and economic—are still basically cannibalistic. Those who can ‘eat’ others through their consumption of products . . . Cannibalism has merely institutionalized itself, cleverly disguised itself. The new heroes, still looking for a collective consciousness, try to devour those who devour us.”<sup>36</sup>

What critics such as Bellei and Schwarz seem not to see are the political ramifications of a marginal culture constantly bombarded by Euro-American culture. The question of what constitutes the Brazilian nation and identity is more complex than ever. And the transnational dimension, with the international media and multinational

capitalism, is increasing rather than decreasing. Rather than divorced from issues of power, I suggest that the cannibals have kept Brazilian identity alive by destabilising colonial and global institutions of power. Whatever Brazilian identity might be, it is not something fixed, inherent, or universal in and of itself, but is constantly evolving and changing, nourished by international as well as national ideas. What is unique about the anthropophagist translators is that rather than convert to European values and ideas, or merely to juxtapose indigenous ideas with European ones, they use the European ideas in an emancipatory fashion in the creation of new cultural identities, ones not separated from but embedded in multiple cultural traditions. Through this process of selecting the best of another culture, adapting and consuming it, and then making it one's own, in short through a process of transculturalisation similar to the anthropophagist's, Brazilians may be better suited to adapt to the new world order than other cultures caught up in more traditional First World/Third World relations.

### **Conclusion: Rethinking Postcolonial Translation**

In the light of the above discussions, now is a particularly good time to rethink the various "postcolonial" theories emerging from the Americas as well as the first wave of critiques of those respective theories. While all were conceived to break down hegemonic norms governing the respective countries and to open the way to new forms of thinking about translation phenomena and for new ways to import difference, it is becoming increasingly clear that any unilateral application of strategies that might work in one country may not work in another country or situation. I am reminded of Gayatri Spivak's criticism of North American feminism that there does seem to be a tendency among

North American intellectual circles to make all Third World writing sound the same—that the woman peasant writer from India begins to sound the same as the male writer from Taiwan.<sup>37</sup> I am sceptical of any universalising theory at this point, and what is most interesting about postcolonial translation is the multitude of different cultures, ideas, traditions, gender roles, religions, myths, and metaphors. To collapse these into any fixed notion of sameness or difference would be a shame.

If we have learned anything from postcolonial translation in the Americas to date, it is that it is much too early to place any limits on the forms and strategies open to postcolonial translation. Rather than one approach—be it modern/postmodern, foreignizing/fluent, masculine/feminist, cannibalistic/Christian—I advocate that we allow for multiple approaches, and diverse and even contradictory strategies, depending upon the text, the communicative situation, and the audience. While I personally do not particularly like traditional strategies of being strictly wedded to the source text, I am also not too enamoured with the new “laws” being generated by target-oriented scholars. While the flaws of Venuti’s, Brossard’s, and de Campos’s theories are now manifest, they are at least experimenting with new forms and strategies, and are challenging notions that historically have been used to suppress and marginalise ethnic minorities within cultures.

In terms of rethinking postcolonial translation from the standpoint of the Americas, questions asked include whether Venuti’s theory is elitist, and how? Are the Canadian feminists “womanhandling” texts in the same way as male translators such as Steiner? Is their approach another essentialising approach? Is a cannibalistic form of translation another form of “art for art’s sake” divorced from real practical politics? I

have welcomed foreignizing translations, feminist translations, and cannibalist translations, which I find innovative, intellectually fascinating, and more often than not giving voice to new perspectives and ideas. Venuti's "foreignizing" approach in his translations of Tarchetti, for example, remind me of Brechtian theatre, with his estranging, alienation effects. What is wrong with reminding the reader that they are reading a translation, or with the translator making him/herself visible in the process? And Brecht's theatre, the Threepenny Opera in Berlin, also performed translations—Russian translations, Greek translations—but using the same techniques developed by Brecht in his own work. Actors would step out of character, interrupting the flow of the piece, reminding the audience that they are not getting a transparent view of the work and forcing them to think about the processes of cultural mediation. With regard to the Canadian feminist theory of translation, are the critics not unfairly equating "womanhandling" with "manhandling"? Perhaps "womanhandling" might be something slightly different—perhaps something more reverent, respectful, collaborative, and creative rather than the violent, invasive, possessive, and manipulative connotations implied by the male term. While the French feminists have been accused of "essentialising," I am not so sure that the same criticism applies to the Canadian women, who to me seem very cognizant of the fact that all discourse is mediated and multiple, embedded in systems of power but also capable of changing those very same systems. I would use terms such as dialogical, intersemiotic, multicultural, and performative to describe their practice, rather than the reductive label "essentialising." With regard to the cannibals from Brazil, the "art for art's sake" critique seems levied by critics using Marxist models based on class rather than literary and linguistic models, and the modes

of colonisation, particularly in a postcolonial world, do not necessarily follow the lines of straight class analysis. Colonisation of ideas can take place at all levels of society, including the intellectual elite as well as the working classes. I return to thinking about the negotiations that led to the San Andrés accords in Mexico, and Marcos's desire to allow more voices to be heard during the negotiation process. As we begin summarising and classifying this first wave of postcolonial translation scholarship, I urge the field neither to uncritically accept, nor too critically reject any one theory. Rather, I suggest that scholars continue with an open mind, open multiple versions, and remain open to translators' voices from all parts of the culture. Postcolonial translation studies is still in its infant stages, and before falling into rhetorical strategies of affirmation or negation, I suggest creating more openings and letting more thoughts proliferate. Let's have more voices at the table rather than fewer. Too many voices have been silenced for too long.

Nos armamos luz a luz  
de los espectros que somos.  
Somos más que todos juntos,  
somos más  
que los pétalos del misterio.

Graffiti en los muros de una estación de ferrocarril<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Luis Hernández Navarro and Ramón Vera Herrera, eds., *Acuerdos de San Andrés* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Venuti, ed., *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1992); *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995); *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London: Routledge, 1998); Mona Baker and Lawrence Venuti, eds., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Venuti (1992), 3-5.

- <sup>4</sup> Venuti (1995), 148ff.
- <sup>5</sup> Venuti (1992), 12-13; (1995), 182-83.
- <sup>6</sup> Marilyn Gaddis Rose, "Foreignizing or Domesticating: Debating Norms Goes With the Territory," in Edith F. Losa, ed., *Keystones of Communication: Proceedings of the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Translators Association* (Medford, NJ: Learned Information, 1993, 265-71), 266.
- <sup>7</sup> Douglas Robinson, *What is Translation? Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997).
- <sup>8</sup> John Milton, "Translation, Book Clubs, and Popular Culture" (unpublished, presented for position as Livre Docente at the University of São Paulo, 1999).
- <sup>9</sup> Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translations, Languages, Cultures* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 136ff.
- <sup>10</sup> Nicole Brossard, *Picture theory* (Montreal: Nouvelle Optique, 1982), *La Lettre aérienne*, essays (Montreal: Editions remue-ménage, 1985) trans. Marlene Wilderman, *The Aerial Letter* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1988), *Le Désert mauve* (Montreal: L'hexagone, 1987).
- <sup>11</sup> Nicole Brossard: *L'Amer, ou, Le Chapitre effrite: Fiction théoretique* (Montreal: Quinze, 1977), trans. Barbara Godard as *These Our Mothers; or, The Disintegrating Chapter* (Toronto: Coach House, 1983); *Picture Theory*, trans. Barbara Godard (Montreal: Guernica, 1991); *Sous la langue / Under the Tongue*, trans. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (Montreal: L'Essentielle, 1987); *Mauve Desert*, trans. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (Toronto: Coach House, 1990).
- <sup>12</sup> Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-belle et infidèle: La traduction comme pratique de réécriture au féminine / The Body Bilingual: Translation as a Rewriting in the Feminine* (Montreal: Editions remue-ménage / Toronto: Women's Press, 1991), 35.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Louky Bersianik, *Les terribles vivantes / Firewords*, dir. Dorothy Hénaut (Canadian National Film Board / Studio D Film, 1987).
- <sup>15</sup> Lotbinière-Harwood, 118.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation" (*Tessera* 6, 1989, 42-53), 50.
- <sup>18</sup> Rosemary Arrojo, "Feminist, 'Orgasmic' Theories of Translation and their Contradictions" (*TradTerm*, São Paulo, 2, 1995) 67-75.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 74.
- <sup>20</sup> Oswald de Andrade, "Manifesto Antropófago" (*Revista de Antropofagia* May 1928), 1.
- <sup>21</sup> Dos Santos 1929.
- <sup>22</sup> Haroldo de Campos, *Deus e o diabo no Fausto de Goethe* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1981).
- <sup>23</sup> Lisa Block de Behar, ed., *Diseminario* (Montevideo: XYZ Editores, 1987).
- <sup>24</sup> Haroldo de Campos, "The Rule of Anthropophagy: Europe under the Sign of Devoration," trans. María Tai Wolff (*Latin American Literary Review* 14.27, Jan.-June 1986), 48-60.
- <sup>25</sup> Augusto de Campos, *Verso, reverso e controverso* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1978).
- <sup>26</sup> Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (London: Verso, 1992).
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 111.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 116, 123.
- <sup>30</sup> Augusto de Campos, "Giacinto Scelsi, um Velho Novíssimo" (*Folha de São Paulo*, 8 de septiembre de 1985).
- <sup>31</sup> Schwartz, 192.
- <sup>32</sup> Sérgio Luiz Prado Bellei, "Brazilian Anthropophagy Revisited" in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iverson, eds., *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 87-109.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 91-2.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., 106.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 108.
- <sup>36</sup> Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, eds., *Brazilian Cinema*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., revsd. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 82-3.

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<sup>37</sup> Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, “The Politics of Translation” in Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips, eds., *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, 177-200), 180.

<sup>38</sup> Hernández, *Acuerdos de San Andrés*, 33. “We gather arms light by light / of the ghosts that we are. / We are more than all of us together, / we are more than the petals of mystery. // Graffiti on the walls of a railway station”